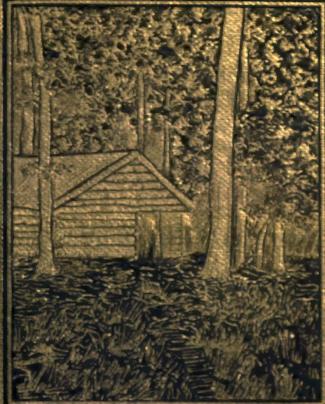


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THE
HERMIT
OF THE
SACO



by
David M. Smyth.



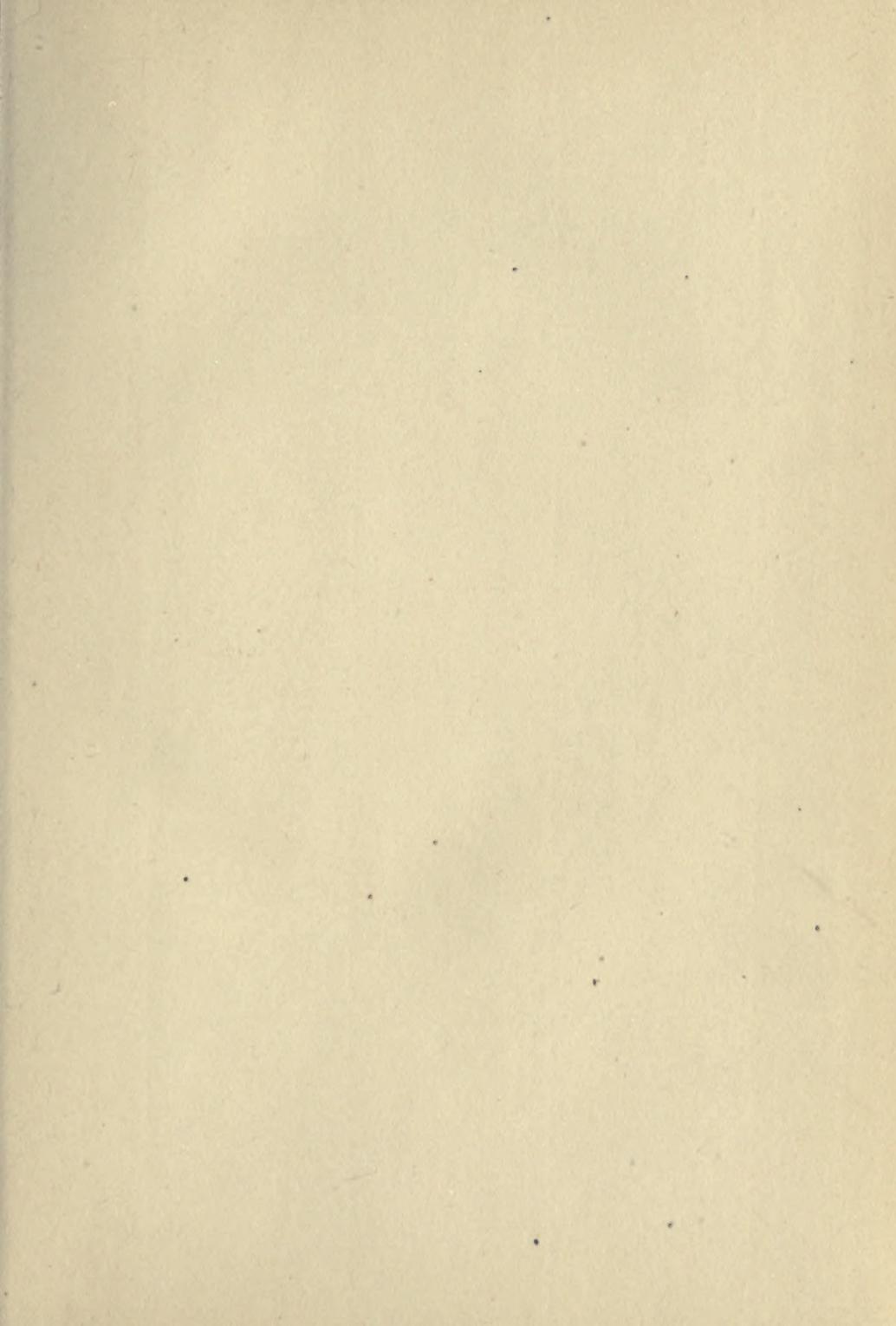
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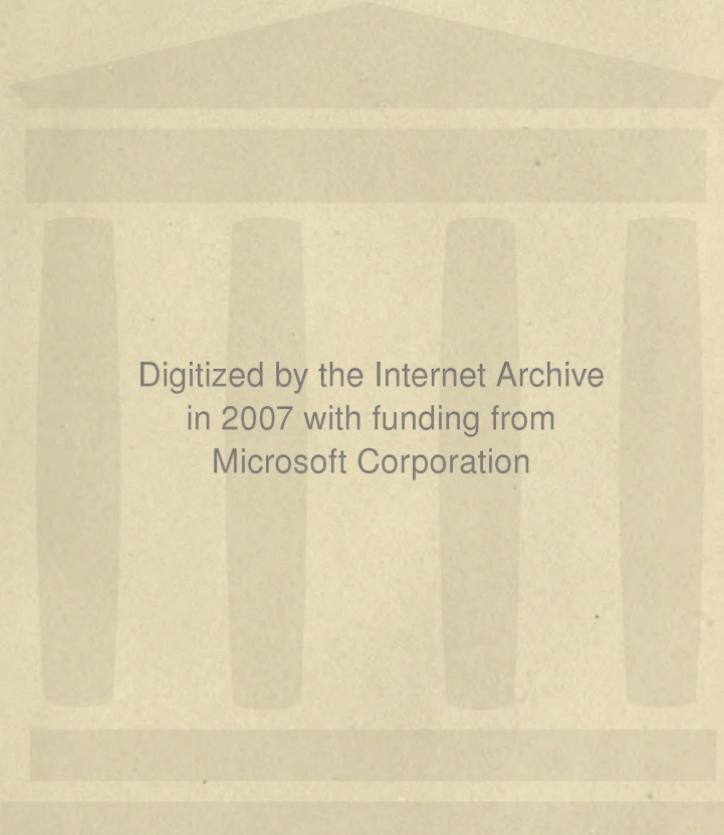
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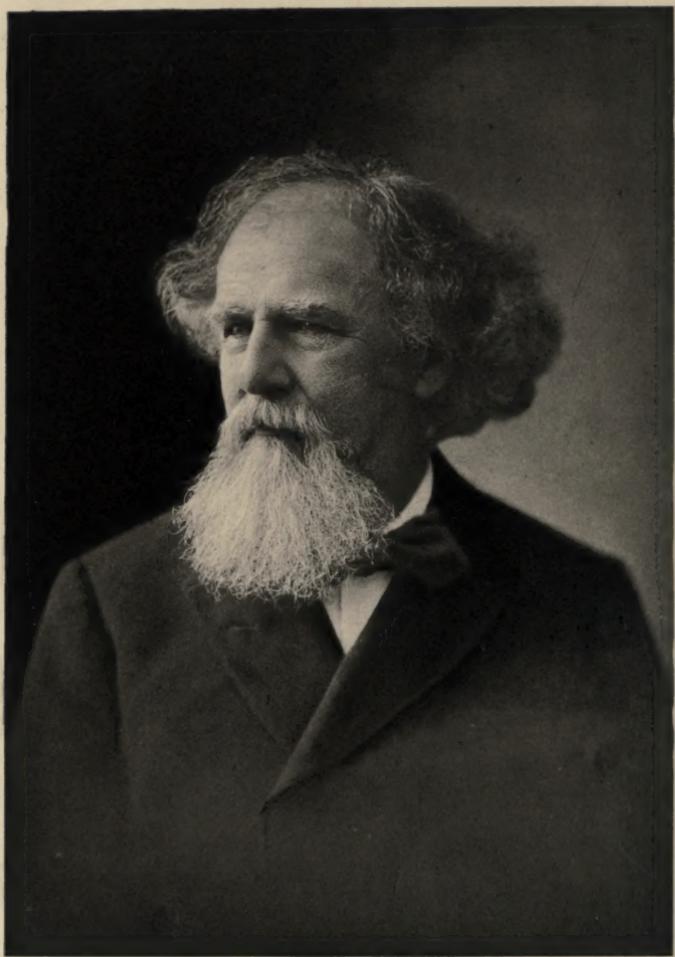
Northwood Narrows

N.H.





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David M. Smyth

THE HERMIT OF THE SACO

Story of the White Mountains

BY

DAVID M. SMYTH



CAMBRIDGE
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1901



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I RESPECTFULLY DEDICATE
THIS VOLUME TO MY FRIEND
THE HON. WM. E. CHANDLER

D. M. SMYTH

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THE HERMIT OF THE SACO

INTRODUCTION

WHY is the Minstrel mute? Is there no Theme
In this fair land? Is Freedom's touch so cold,
Too harsh for music, too wakeful for a dream?
So lost in selfishness, and lust for gold,
That the sweet Muse forgets to pluck the strings
That lift the soul till with the spheres it sings?

Are these bright fields that lull the eastern sea,
And yonder slope, gilded by setting sun,—
A rising Empire, vaster, it may be,
Than ever yet the sun hath shone upon,—
Not worth a poem, ringing out its praise,
The story of the times, its early days?

Is there no hand to gather the bright flowers
That strew the pathway of its hill and glen?
No bard like Scotland's, with transcendent powers,

To show the future what this land has been ;
Tell the wild struggling host, that even here
Once lingered love, once fell the tender tear ?

Has man grown hard, the world grown cold,
And music flown this lovely earth ?
Is there no story to be told
Since Liberty with us found birth ?
Must it be pomp and glittering spears,
And knights of some great royal name,
Winning their ladies' love, through tears,
To gratify some braggart's claim ?
Is there no beauty in our flowers,
No sheen upon our waters bright,
No sylvan pleasures in our bowers,
No sparkle in our stars at night ?
Has Nature but a shadow grown,
To meet the cruel wants of life ;
Beauty, a thing to look upon
And but a part of human strife ;
Life but a rind that holds within
Our treasures from the touch of sin ?

But look upon our bright green hills,
And listen to our bubbling rills
That down their bosoms flow !

Nature looks out without a frown,
Nor had she e'er so rich a crown,
As here her minstrels know.
In the most sweet and tender line,
In beauty all her own,
A string of crystals may it shine,
When poet's work be done!

I

'T WAS in the early days, when on the hearth
 Burned in its glory the great birch-wood fire;
When winter's evening passed so full of mirth
 And simple joy no honest heart could tire.
The light so free made merry in its chase
 O'er everything, or group or comely face.

Through all the room it runs, o'er unsealed walls,
Along the beams and rafters to the roof,
Showing in golden nuggets where it falls,
And through the gloom, a rich, warm, sheeny woof,—
A wondrous fabric, where we see combined
The witching fancies of poetic mind !

Delightful vision, where the Angels meet,
Laden with sunshine from the courts above,—
Their mission's end, the one serene retreat,
Where they may leave long-carried freight of love,

And in return bear to their heavenly plain
Tokens of home, love without shade or stain.

Thus fancy leads, and near the hearth we see
A worthy mother and her daughter fair,
So happy now, we wonder can it be
That they have ever felt the touch of care.
But see unrest ! They crowd the window pane
And listening watch and listen still in vain.

I need not say how beautiful they are.
They differ only in the length of years,
And loveliness that crowns a mother's care,
As what we love is dearest through our fears.
We see the sweetest flower where dew is spread,
The brightest sunshine through the storm we dread.

The younger comely, and of such sweet grace
As might make captive, in the flowing curl
Of her free hair, the zephyrs in their chase.
And yet we see her but a mother's girl,
So pure, we seem to read her inmost heart,—
A simple life, devoid of every art.

It were unkind and vandal, I must prove,
In my poor art to picture such an one,—
Fair as we dream the cherished ones we love.

At best, the picture were but poorly done;
And our rough lines, the broken glints would be
Of far-off stars upon a troubled sea.

Yes, a vain task and thankless it must prove,
To bring such beauty to thee, through my mind.
What is most fair is what we see through love,
And when our love to all things else is blind,
The soul, the senses, all a vision sweet,
On quiet waters where the currents meet !

Life? What is life, but mingling as we move,
In thousand ways, some gentle, some unkind.
But real life is when we flow in love,
And leave the purling, smiling lines behind.
Life is but love, without the lines of strife, —
Love is the whole of pure and honest life.

And love is more. In gentle lines it leads
The heart to kindness. The life to good is given,
The noblest impulse to the grandest deeds.
And, at last, it is the path to heaven.
Love is the whole, the noblest part of life.
Life in pure love is stranger to all strife.

A little cabin, built of unhewn logs,
Chinked tight with clay without and moss within,

With ample shed for kine and horse and dogs,—
Known through the region as the Crawford Inn.
And no mean place, for here the traveler found,
If storm or danger caught him on the way,
The best of care, a balm for every wound,
A help to go, a welcome should he stay.

The host was kind in this his chosen life,
A pioneer of nature rough and wild,
With bone and sinew equal to the strife,
And yet with heart as tender as a child.

He comes ('tis night, night's darkest dreary hour)
From some hard task, in from the beating storm,
Some ill adventure, that hath tried his power.
His breath comes fast, his brow is flushed and warm;
He casts a heavy carcass at his feet,—
A bear, and one of huge and ugly main,
As fierce a foe as one might dare to meet,
Though not the first or largest he had slain.

He swung his rifle to its wonted place,
Shook from his beard and locks the dripping rain.
A merry smile ran rippling o'er his face ;
His voice we hear, in ever sweet refrain.
The burden of his song is home and love
Of wife, impromptu verses of the hour,

While willing hands most deftly do remove
The great fur wrap, that taxes all their power,
His coonskin cap, and boots of toughened hide.
And the great coat slips from his giant frame,
Reveals a form in manhood's early pride,—
A nobleman in more than empty name.

He smiling met his wife and she would know
The smallest detail, and 't is plain to see
How full of care the hours that moved so slow
Had been inwrought with danger that might be.
She stood on tiptoe, slipped her tiny arm
Beneath his golden locks, and fain would steal
The wonted kiss, but started in alarm,
Within those curls damp sticky clots to feel!
Her hand withdrawn was crimson with the stain.
“Wounded, my dear!” She trembling asked him,
 “Where?”
He smiling said, “'T is little,” yet 't is plain
It had been death to him or to the bear.

“I had not thought my blood could flow as much,
Or dare usurp the path thy fingers know,
Or could have lingered for thy gentle touch,
To leave its crimson on thy hand of snow.
But it is well, and will the sooner heal
And disappear when I thy fingers feel.”



MARY CRAWFORD

She dressed the wound and with such tender care
Cut from his head some of the golden strands,
Only enough, so much she prized them there :
More skill could not have come from surgeon's hands.

“ Now tell me all. It is not often so
Bears, panthers, wolves, or any living thing,
Hath ever wounded thee, but to their woe :
How this great trophy that to-night you bring ? ”

“ Trophy it is, and well earned trophy too.
But some mysterious thing, I can't divine,
Hath left its mark so plainly to my view.
The bear is blazed ; the game is none of mine.
Game in these woods belongs to him whose skill
First strikes the vital blow, or holds ensnared
The roaming beast. I take but what I kill,
Unless with claimant it is justly shared.

“ I had no knife, and this with knife was slain.
Fierce was the conflict. I was in its power,
When past its snapping teeth, a knife so plain !
Sparks from the steel flew off, a glinting shower,
And in the flash I saw a human face,
A human arm, dealing a well-aimed blow ;
And his full outlined, noble form could trace,—
A friend in need, he could not be a foe.

“ I seldom sleep, but when alone to-night,
I gave the bear advantage, and he took
All that I gave, and showed me in his might,
How little, even-handed, he would brook.
I met him unaware, and the first blow
Gave him first blood, and brought us face to face.
Quicker than thought or heart’s responsive flow,
Pinioned he held me in his rough embrace.

“ Can I describe the moments as they fly,
The mighty pulses of my beating heart,
The lightning that was flashing in mine eye
Athwart the flame that in his eyeballs dart ?
I feel these sinews grow, this brawny arm
Become as iron, these limbs as lithe as steel.
A wondrous power moves through me as a charm,
A something more than human strength I feel.
I fling the quivering carcass at my feet,
Throw out my hand and cheery call my friend,
Or foe, perchance ; for, now in swift retreat,
The crackling brush his hasty flight portend.
I call and call again. No answers come,
No living thing or signs of life appear.
At last, in doubt, I bring the carcass home.
Who gets it now, must seek it fairly here.
He saved my life, and yet why sneaking come ?
Why be a friend, and yet a shadow be ?

If his, the game should fairly grace his home;
But if not his, he gets it not from me."

He shook his shoulders, chased away the frown
That had been ploughing furrows in his brow,
Fondled the curls of darkest richest brown,
That fringed a face aglow with beauty now.
He kissed his wife, his mate, his love, his life,
Whose willing hands made lighter every care,
As singing birds make us forget our strife,
Or lovely flowers clothe earth so cold and bare.

II

FIVE years agone, when springtime comes again,
He with his rifle eager in the chase
Came here at night-fall, to an open plain
In the great forest, then a camping-place.
The murmur of the brook was music sweet,
Meeting in full the ever cherished dream
Of all his life, the one serene retreat,
The native wildwood, by the dashing stream.
And weary toil made sleep a welcome guest,
So quiet here. The forest's breathing sigh
Was melody that wooed him soon to rest
And pleasant dreams, without a danger nigh.

The morning broke, and with the dawning light,
He sought a bath at the swift river-side.
Amazed, his eyes were feasting in delight;
A herd of deer were startled in their pride,
Sniffing the air, stopping perchance to see
What this new wonder in their midst could be.

This was enough; and as his fondest dreams
Were full, his thoughts took shape, and he
Came to decision: "Why not as it seems?
Can this be aught but Paradise for me?
What seek I more? Why need I longer climb
These mountain sides, or wander weary day?
Why not remain with nature so sublime,
And have a world where all my fancies play?
Can I find more? 'T is nature's virgin sod,
The native forest. White man's voice till now
Ne'er waked the echo, where his foot ne'er trod!
How rich a harvest here awaits my plough!
The place I pictured to my darling bride
A month ago,—the craving of my heart;
Just the wild scene that wooed me from her side,
To hunt and toil. Why can she not take part?
This is the place; a very home I see.
The deer so tame may browse about the door,
And why not to her pets and foundlings be?
I know 't will please her; what could please her more?

She knows I love the chase, and well I know
She loves what I love, if it can be so."

He built his cabin, cleared a garden plot,
And when the autumn its rich glories spread,
Sought Mary's home, nor was one thing forgot
Of all his plans, his hopes, his fears, his dread.
He knew it could not be all sunshine there;
Hardship and toil the pioneer must meet
Away from home and kindred. They must bear
Trials to them, from which was no retreat;
Sickness will come and death's cold sullen tread
May leave the weak one in the forest lone.

"Cease all these dreams, for I fear naught," she said;
"We are but one,—one flesh, one heart, one bone."
They hither came, each to the other dear.
The years flew on; a little daughter fair
Played at their hearth and called for all their care,
And this new home was full of merry cheer.

III

TWAS winter, and full near the midnight hour.
The embers low were sinking on the hearth;
The storm was seething in its angry power.
But hark! we feel the beating, trembling earth.
A panting steed, as in a race for life,

The howling wolves were pressing sore and strong ;
So near their prey, they snarled in angry strife.
If it be man, he must have help e'er long.
Crawford had heard it, and in unshod feet,
With trusty rifle, to the fray had gone
Without a fear, so noble, lithe, and fleet
To save a life,— would even more have done.
He overtook them then in wavering flight,
And fell upon them with such sturdy blows,
They left their quest, and turned in angry might,
A pack of fiends, a host of angry foes.
He stood alone, wary and on his guard.
Dauntless and brave, he met the living wall.
Again they came so strong ; they pressed him hard ;
Again so fierce, he staggered. Will he fall ?
But see the flame ! A torch, a glowing brand
Like meteor falls ! The wolves in terror fly.
There swings a besom in a sturdy hand.
And now beyond is blazing in the sky
An old birch tree with tattered, oily rind.
And there athwart its spiral flame, we see
In hasty flight, one stern, yet not unkind.

“The same strange face ! The same deft skillful hand !
The one that killed my bear on stormy night !
Again he flies, a shadow in the land,
A friend in need, — why not a friend by right ?”

Thus Crawford mused. He heard the snarling pack
In a new chorus, howling down the glen
After new work, upon a new-found track.
What is their quest? God grant it be not men.

He found a bleeding stranger at his feet,
Whose helpless form received his tender care;
A fair young man, in clothing rich and neat,
Helpless and wounded, yet uncommon fair.
In gentle arms he like a child was borne
Into the cabin, a weak, helpless one,
In sorry plight, unconscious, bleeding, torn.
All skillful hands could do was for him done.

The stranger lived, and felt his strength again,
Yet with his health, his face began to wear
An ugly look, a frown not born of pain,—
A something dreadful in a face so fair.
So months went on, and months so full of care,
Until restored he was to health and strength;
He left their door, with a proud, thankless air,
And made them happy in his loss at length.
Through all this time, they did not learn his name,
Or anything by which he might be known,
Whither he went, neither from whence he came,
Nor left he tokens for the goodness shown.

And as he went, an echo filled the air,
An uncouth echo. Hark! " Beware ! Beware ! "

IV

NOW the cold winter, with its piercing blast,
Gives place to spring, and swelling buds appear.
From melting snow the torrent is rising fast ;
The brook is a river. The wild flood is near.
Who never saw it, can but ill conceive,
How fierce, how fearful, and how cruel strong,
When in wild storm the snows of winter leave.
Ice gorged, it bears trees, rocks, and earth along;
Relentless still, if accident betray
Some helpless human creature in its way.

Now such had come, and in most dreadful sweep ;
The winter had been cold, and long, and drear.
The ice was hard, the snow was thick and deep ;
Its breaking held back long into the year.
And Spring came on in frolic and in mirth,
To find her realm in thraldom to her foe,
Scourging the valley, while the mountains laugh
To hear her chiding bid the winter go.

We see the stream where once a little child
Might dam the waters back, and laugh to see

Them creeping, reaching, even leaping wild
In almost baffled efforts to be free,
Now a great flood, sweeping in its power
The sturdy oak, together with the flower.

It was expected, and the years gone by
Had taught the household what a flood might be,
How to prepare to meet it, and to fly
When gorges break, setting the waters free.
But the long winter and the double care
Had taken all their time. The spring came on.
They saw its flood in torrents rushing there,
E'er what was needed had been fully done.
The gorged ice above them in the wood
Might break e'er nightfall, and in one fell sweep
Wreck all the valley where their cabin stood,
And more, engulf them in its surges deep.

Almost too late, e'en now. The rattling door
Swung on its hinges and was opened wide,
And one whose face a look of terror wore
Bade them in haste fly to the mountain side.
Seizing their child, he like a deer was gone.
The flood was there, and Crawford and his wife
Followed as best they could the fleeing one
Through the wild surf, — it was a race for life!

They safely reached the bank, and saw above
A ruddy flame shine on the mountain side,
And timely friend and child athwart it move.
He beaconed them,— his light might be their guide.
But hear the echo weird and low and wild,
In the great wood, “ *The child! The child! The child!* ”

They reached the place after full much of care.
Beneath a rocky shelf, so warm and dry,
Their own, and more, another child was there,
But he again did like a shadow fly,—
A mystery seen in the flashing light
(So deft and skillful and of no mean form).
Brave e'en to death, he would not shun the fight;
Why fly from hearts that beat to him so warm ?

So strong to save, so cruel to conceal
And leave the mind to such a wild debate,—
A mystery with nothing to reveal
From whence the child, or what its parents' fate ;
A secret that may break some mother's heart,
Make desolate and lone some pleasant hearth.
Amazed they turned to the most cruel part ;
A mother's corpse was by them on the earth.
Her face, in death now rigid, hard, and cold,
Won their warm hearts and brought a kindly tear,
Speaking such things as tongue hath never told,—

WILLEY'S FESTERED SIDE



Story too sad for any mortal ear,
Story of heroism, beyond the ken
Of common life or noble acts of men.

A fair young mother and beloved was plain
In the rich tokens they found clinging there :
The rings, the locket, and the golden chain,
The miniatures of faces, young and fair,
The wife, the husband, in love's flush and bloom,
As well, the little one, now waif alone.
How strange from that to this sad scene of gloom !
How terrible, if everything were known !

They did all that most gentle hands could do
With the wet corpse, and with o'erflowing heart
Turned to the child, with love that came anew,
A love so sweet, devoid of every art.
“ To me,” our hero said, “ the child appears
In counterpart almost our little one,—
The same in size, in features, and in years ;
Why not our own ? What better can be done ? ”

“ ’T is strange,” said Crawford, “ who this one can be,
So brave and valiant, yet a shadow still.
He comes in every time of need to me,
Only to help. It can bode nothing ill.
But why the echo, e'er so strange and wild,

In the great wood, ‘*The child! The child! The child!*’
And the prophetic word with stranger’s care,
In that wild night, ‘*Beware! Beware! Beware!*’
The fire he kindled, and in safety kept
The little ones from danger till we come;
He was alert and ready while we slept,
He rescued us and others from like doom!
And who may say but on this lonely road
Some hapless family this stormy night,
Hoping in time to reach our safe abode,
Are victims to the flood’s wild surging might?
And this lone waif and yonder mother’s form,
The rescued trophies of a noble deed?
He shuns no foe, no danger, flood, or storm,
Is quick to will and swifter to their need.

“Our dangers were the same, dear wife. Our child
He took and fleeing left thee to my care,
Barely escaping through the flood so wild;
Perchance more fierce its force was raging there,
And more he ventured, for the dead is here.
Who knows what toil this moment he may seek,
What suffering his timely hand may cheer?
Can I not know him, see him, to him speak?
Or better still, some of his dangers share,
And learn from him what bravery can be?
How feels a heart that bears another’s care,

A noble conscience in all duty free ?
Sure some hard fate has driven him from life,
Some sad experience, or shattered love
Has made him mad, to choose such scenes of strife
And be a phantom and a shadow move !
Howe'er it be, our care must be the same.
The little one were motherless indeed
Unless adopted to our home and name.
Who could do less ? Behold its bitter need !
The child shall be our own, and glad we take
What Providence in such mysterious way
Hath given to us, for yon poor mother's sake,
If God so will, that it may with us stay."

The morning breaks, and with the light appears
A fearful scene of driftwood, ice, and flood.
One night destroys the honest toil of years,
The river surges where the cabin stood.
Could I portray it, could we realize
The awful picture of that morning hour ?
Then might I paint the lightning as it flies,
Or the wild ocean in its tempest power.

V

WE hasten on. The summer comes apace,
The flood-washed valley seems again to be
Almost restored, a pleasant dwelling-place.
A new and larger cabin there we see,
On better chosen spot, on ground so high
That greater floods arising in the spring
May surge and foam, yet harmlessly go by,
That other days more pleasant things may bring.
I need not if I could the past recite
Of what befell the household since the hour,
So full of terror, that wild stormy night
When the wild flood was seething in its power.

All that is known, except the toil and care
Of clearing up the wreck, to build anew;
The hardships that a settler's family bear,
The double toil his patient hands must do,—
All that is known, we yet must ask in vain
The circumstance that brought their second child.
More than we know their seeking could not gain.
The little one was there, so sweet and mild
And scarcely three years old, its lisping tongue
Had but poor art such secrets to reveal.
A happy lot, that she was yet so young
That memory had nothing to conceal.
So very like their own, twins could not be

More like, more loving, or more dear than they,
Two happy children in their pleasures free,—
Which were the other? Who would dare to say?

They puzzled o'er a name, but Mary still
She would be called and answered to no other,
So resolute and of unbending will.
Three Marys now, two daughters and a mother.
It pleased our hero much. Said he, "Why not?
It is a worthy name, and should not she
Have quite as sweet a name as can be got?
Why three, when one is just as good as three?
And need we care to know the two apart?
I feel my love for each one just the same,
And well I know the love that's in thy heart
Towards this one, weak and helpless when she came."
It was decided ever from that day:
But one in everything, but one in name;
Only the one, they never mentioned two.
So very like and always dressed the same,
One they were known and only one they knew.

THE year is flying with its sigh and song,
And toil and care have gathered goodly store,
The earth bequeaths to willing hands so strong
In stacks of grain around the cabin door,
The harvest's finished and the autumn throws
A silken hazy veil over the scene.
The lazy stream is lying in repose,
The sun's fierce rays are shorn of half their gleam.
Nature's at rest; the gentle breezes bear
A ripened fragrance from the mountain side.
The rustling forest shows where here and there
The autumn's hand its dainty art hath tried.
A few short days in wonder will reveal
How deft the artist and what tints can be
From the rich pencil that its touch may feel,
And frolic with and scatter far and free,—
A very world of color, pure and bright,
The gate of heaven that closes out the night.

And need I tell you at the cabin door
Were the two children in their merry sport,
Their cup of childish pleasure running o'er,
Happy as guests at Nature's royal court?
'T was eventide; the slow descending sun
Cast slanting beams over the rocky brow,
As streams of metal from the furnace run.

Castles of gold the mountains glistened now,
And a rich haze, so silvery in its tone,
Sparkled and gleamed in sheen of gold and brown,
A soft rich glow, through all the valley thrown,—
So fair, it seemed Heaven's wealth of light let down.
Peace, more than peace, all that it can bestow
Is at our feet, and Heaven is here below !

But hark ! A cry of pain and anger now !
And see ! The children strove in wrathful spite.
A fury knitting on each little brow,
They tore each other, like two beasts in fight.
Surprise and sorrow filled the mother's heart.
“ Where learned they this, for it has been my care
To teach them love, devoid of every art,
Except in love the other's ills to bear ? ”

The castles fell that she had builded high,—
The future that was pictured all so bright,—
But empty dreams, relinquished with a sigh,
Her fondest hopes but visions of the night.

The trouble was about the golden chain,
The one rich relic of the mother dear,
Who ne'er could wear those golden links again,
Or even now in memory appear.
For three long years (and childhood's years are long)

Since that dread night was buried in the past,
This mother strove to train a love so strong
Within each heart that it would ever last.
The golden trinkets for that mother's sake
Had been well kept and treasured with all care.

The children found them and were quick to take
Forth from their hiding-place the baubles fair,
Pleasant to one, but in the other's eyes
Some dreadful fancy seemed around them wrought ;
One laughed with glee to see the golden prize,
The other shrank from what her double brought,
Shrank but a moment, then in fury wild
She grasped the jewels, flung them in the stream,
And turned in anger on her fellow child.
So panther-like her angry eyes did gleam !
We saw the quarrel and may read the heart,
The mother's sorrow that cannot be told,
While with strong hands she rends the two apart.
But see the sky ! The evening turns to gold,
The shades come on, the night so hushed and still
Covers the scene. But who may know the care,
The anxious care, a mother's heart may feel ?
Who knows the pain the mother's heart must bear ?
Who knows the pangs of sorrow when we weep
And lose a treasure we would fondly keep ?
Tears, like the diamond, sparkle in the hue

MOUNT WASHINGTON



Of light that finds them, and we see expressed
The very soul in which they are caressed.
The senses centred, absolutely true.
Sorrow may break the heart and fill the eye,
The heavy hand may crush the soul with fear.
We sink in peace and slumber through a tear;
And yet, through tears, we rise in ecstasy !

This evening hour amid her tears and prayers,
The mother sleeps and buries all her cares.
The night was drear and long, with omens sad,
And yet all nature seemed so full of light.
In prayers and thanks they joined for what they had,
And hoped the morning would be clear and bright,
Sinking to rest, trusting their cares to God,
Who guards as well as chastens with the rod.

VII

A STRANGE wild sound now startles them from rest,
A shriek-like echo from the panther's lair.
Again they hear their dreaded, welcome guest,
In the great wood, "The fire! The fire! The fire!"
The cabin door swings on its hinges wide;
The messenger whom they have seen before
Points to the flames that cleave the mountain side,
And bids them flee, stay not a moment more.

Their senses reeled; it surely could not be
That their strong hands could not delay the flame.
The brook was near, its quenching flood was free.
With buckets full they quickly went and came.
Alas! too late! for the relentless fire
In the thick forest on the mountain side
Was foe that neither strength nor will could tire
Or hope to conquer, fight, or flee, or hide;
And in a moment, the great stacks of grain
Caught from the cinders falling like a shower.
No living one the cabin door could gain,
To rescue aught was not in human power.
All they possessed was wrapped in seething flame,
All that they loved, beyond a hope to save.
To stay was death, to flee appeared the same.
Utterly helpless now, with hearts so brave
They could not flee; the fire was everywhere.
Beside a rock, o'er which the flame was leaping,
Great Crawford bent, his form was cover there,
To that dear one, his loved one in his keeping.

But for a moment, yet how much of dread
In that bare moment, in the roaring flame!
How much of life, and yet how near the dead
Was it to them, no human words can name.

'T was past, and now into the near by river

He plunged to quench his raiment all afame.
Renewed in strength, he hoped he might deliver
His own heart's love from terrors none could name.
Above them now was swinging in the sky
A flaming pine, its branches all aglow.
Swaying it fell; he sprang with eager cry,
Barely in time to save the dreadful blow.
They fell together. Human strength had fled.
The flames he felt not, when his form might shield
His dearer self. Of pain he had no dread,
Or, in such duty, pain was not revealed.

But human strength, and human courage too,
Must reach the bound where it cannot prevail,
And he had done all human will could do,
And only sank when human strength must fail.
She first revived, but why should she awake
To such black horrors as must meet her eye?
What was there left misfortune could not take?
What she might choose, 'twas better far to die.
Alas! to see within the angry flame
Her children's fate in horror without name!
Yet there is hope. Above the roaring fire,
High on the mountain, in a voice so clear
And long and loud it seems 't will never tire,
The Hermit's cry and echo, "Have no fear."
Her husband lived, and in his life she hoped.

His strength returned, and with her feeble aid,
Through the thick smoke, to safer place they groped,
Where leaning rocks a better refuge made.
With her we leave him, for her earnest love
Will meet his needs and dress and heal his wounds;
And their strong will and hands again will prove
How much of power there is where love abounds.

The warning messenger escapes our care.
But see him now, as nimble as a deer
Fleeing the hounds. His arms the children bear
Beyond the flame now pressing on so near,
And they escape and on the mountain side,
Above the timber, on a rocky waste,
They stop to rest. It is the shadow guide.
Through a deep gorge, a winding path he traced.

'T was night's dark hour, revealing dreadful things
In the deep valley, far beneath their feet.
E'en with the morning, still the horror clings;
Destruction black hath made its work complete.
The green of yesterday, the forest fair,
The blooming meadow where the cabin stood,
The pleasant things that were so lately there,—
A blackened mass, o'er which dark vapors brood.
All, all is gone,—the dog before the door,
The browsing kine, the tinkle of the bell.

No sight so sad hath met these eyes before,
More desolate than ever tongue can tell.

I need not follow with my faltering pen
The ills and sorrows that must need befall
Our hero and his wife in trials then,
Knowing full well these troubles are not small.
Their shelter gone, their food and all their store
A blackened heap, their corn in golden ear
Smoky and burned is golden corn no more.
Yet to them this a godsend must appear,
And be their food the dreary winter through.
The game was scarce, eluding all their care ;
And he too weak successful to pursue
The straggling creatures that might venture there.

Nor need we follow in the Hermit's lead
But for the children. Our deep interest calls
Us to a cave, a hermit's choice, indeed,
A lonesome refuge 'neath the rocky walls.
A pine knot burning throws a flickering glare
Over the place, revealing to our eye
How very little comfort might be there,
How much for love, himself he would deny.
He placed the children softly side by side,
Cheering the one and caring for the other,

Until in sleep their weary troubles hide,
As tenderly and gently as a mother.

Leaving them now, he for a time was gone.
Returning soon with sorrow in his face,
He said, " 'T is o'er, what Crawford has not done
Need in no other ever be disgrace.
What his strong arms for love would not have dared,
Or his strong will for her would not have done
Was not for other to have met and shared ;
What he must lose, no other could have won.

" But I, poor Hermit, I so rough and wild,
What can I be in place of such a mother
To take these children, I, poor Nature's child,
Helpless myself, how can I help another ?
I must away and with the morning's light
Bear them to some one who has better care,
A better home, and thus a better right
To innocence that I can never share.

" And then my oath, the curse that binds me still.
If I should keep them, I must loose my tongue !
I cannot love and that hard oath fulfill !
What love I not that lingers with me long ?
I must not help who is not pressed by danger,
Nor for a moment meet a human face ;

I must not speak unless it be to stranger,—
My vow divides me from the human race.
Yet my poor heart seeks ever to bestow
Its love on something,—this my rusty gun,
My violin, whose music, soft and low,
Makes harmony with streamlets as they run.
And now these children thrust upon my care,—
What could I be before their prattling tongue?
I worship them. O tell me! could I bear
Caress from them, so innocent and young,
With the sweet artlessness of childish love?
How more than human weakness it must prove!
But what is that to me? My heart's a stone.
I must be lost, or I must be alone.”

The children woke and, strange enough though true,
Must we believe it, can it surely be,
In anger one the other did pursue
In savage outbursts of deep enmity!
And he must interfere to stop the strife,
Else the aggressor, with determined will,
And cruel spite, would take the other's life,
Who helpless sank in terror from the ill.

“ What can this be? And who will dare explain
The secret working of the human heart?
Children appear like wrangling beasts again.

Is love, at best, but a poor practised art ?
Can it be so ? Is the weak human breast,
Left to itself, but a vile viper's nest ?
Life, but an hour so full of weary care
It has no pleasures that we could desire,
No hope that comes without a doubt to share,
No sweets of which we do not early tire ?
A hermit's is my choice, a hermit still !
The little ones again must bear their lot,
Where fortune calls them, be it good or ill.
Life is a dream and sweetest when forgot ! ”

VIII

A SHOWER had fallen during the long night
And quenched the fury of the spreading flame ;
A waste of blackness met the morning light.
A dreadful picture, can it be the same ?
The game destroyed would seek the woods no more ;
Succulent roots, the Hermit's daily food,
Were all consumed ; the brook before the door
Was dark and bitter from the ashy wood ;
And the shrill blast proclaimed the winter near !
He had no treasures that he could not bear, —
Another place was better far than here,
And the first day saw him well started there.

The children both were ever at his side,
Or when aweary in his brawny arm,
Or yet again, on either shoulder ride,
Cherished and helped and guarded from all harm.
Need we to follow where his journeys lead,
Or can we know his suffering and strife?
Perplexed and chafed by these new cares indeed,
So changed from his free, careless, roving life.
For years before, he had not known restraint,
Or had a charge wherein he was not free;
But now so kind, without the least complaint,
He was as gentle as a sire could be.
The long day's travel made them tired and sore
And he full weary struggled on in pain,
Bent with the load his aching shoulders bore,
Through the black forest, over hill and plain.

The day was spent and many miles were spread
Betwixt them and the sights of yestere'en.
Again the leaves were rustling to his tread
And the great forest glowed in living green.
And here a pathway, and below appears
A habitation. Hark! the tinkling bell,
And fair young girl of scarce a dozen years,
With milk pail swinging, wanders up the dell.
He bade the children go and ask her bring
To them warm milk, fresh from the brindled cow,

Then turned, and ne'er was bird on swifter wing
Or deer more fleet than he in forest now.
I need not say two children of their years
And fair as they and left by him alone
Would be uncared for or that pleading tears
Must win them friends, their presence being known.
Their lone conditions and their simple art
Soon made them welcome, and a mother there
With other children took them to her heart,
That with her own her hearthstone they might share.
Their raiment torn and blackened with the smoke,
Hungry and tired with the long day's ride,
More than their simple Prattling tongues, bespeak
That great misfortune brought them to her side.

And more, she said, " Is this one not the child
We hear the hunters praising, when they come,
From o'er the mountain, in the valley wild,—
The Saco Valley, Crawford's lonely home ?
And this the other one, so like indeed,
The waif that came ? " But now they were asleep.
She left them to the rest they so much need,
With prayer that angels might their slumbers keep.



THE CRAWFORD CABIN

IX

'T is later autumn and the leaves are flying,
And through the pines, a stronger breeze is sighing;
The broken clouds haste by on swifter wing,
A ripened color covers everything;
Nature is stern and all things are in haste,
The fragments gathered. It seems near the end;
Moments are precious. Time's too short to waste,
And all from something evil would defend.
It is the day before cold winter's breath,
The hour that lays the summer's bloom in death.
A year had gone since the wild sweeping flame
Over the mountains in its terror came.
Its scars were still upon the withered trees;
A scent of ashes fills the passing breeze.
Yet sturdy hands, with constant earnest toil,
Have built another cabin and beside
Have won a harvest from the blackened soil,
And shown a will well worth a yeoman's pride.

The two were at the door. The sinking sun
Again in gold bedecked the mountain brow.
The duties of the day and prayers were done.
But see! Some wonder claimed attention now.

He beaconed her. "I wonder can it be
E'en more than hope—our little one I see!"
They ran in haste to meet her as she came,
Doubting, mistrusting she could be the same.
So full of wonder and with choking voice
They wept and stammered, they so much rejoice.
"Can it be so, our Mary from the dead!
I hoped as much; hope strengthened every day.
The Hermit's signs in every path I tread,
His strange wrought tokens in my every way,
Saying the same, although with voiceless tongue.
Mementos of her in the bushes hung,
A hundred ways and in a hundred places,
The water seemed to bear our daughters' faces!

"And in my watching, during all the year,
With every day, these tell-tale things appear,—
Always a sign; yet ever full of doubt,
I feared to know what it was all about.
To find the author is beyond my power,
Seek as I will, or do whate'er I may.
Why try me so, whoever he may be?
A friend he'd find in being known to me."

And need we know the story of the year
From prattling tongue, in her most childish way?
She tells of friends who were so kind and dear,

And of "Old Papa." Laughing, she would say,
He was a wild man, yet he was so good,
He seemed to be a guardian in the wood.

His manner was so kind; if ills befall,
If either child had trouble, care, or pain,
He ever ready came at their first call,
Were they alone. But others sought in vain
To meet or know him. To the woods he'd fly
Like hunted deer, he was so wild and shy.

The Massons,—these kind folk whose home they
shared,—
Knew well his ways and felt when he was there,
Perfectly guarded that no danger dared
To reach their home or give them aught of care.
Whate'er his will, the children were his own,
And all was best whate'er he may have done.

They saw him every day, for he would bring,
In white birch baskets, berries, fruit, and flowers.
If weary they, a lullaby he'd sing,
Fondly caress them when alone for hours;
But should a footstep's crackling tread be heard,
Away he'd fly and leave them like wild bird.

“ He talked but little till he said one day,
Papa and Mamma live, and I must come
Far o'er the mountains from these friends away.
Papa was wishing that I would come home.

He told me bid them all a kind farewell,
Ask God to bless the place in which they dwell.

“ Mary is safe. Old Papa is her guard,
And happy now as any birds that sing.
Nothing on earth would dare to hurt his ward,
None have more pleasure than his hands can bring,
Dear Old Papa ever kind and good,—
And listen now, his echo in the wood.”

A soft wild strain floats through the forest trees,
In kindly tone his trembling voice we hear,
A thousand echoes floating on the breeze,
A thousand echoes ringing out so clear,

“ Lullaby! Lullaby! God bless them in their love!
God's will be done! His kindly purpose prove.”

X

TEN years are gone, ten weary years perchance;
A long decade of sunshine and of care,
A web of life o'er which if we would glance

We'd find so much of deepest interest there,
A history of people, whose strange life
Far from their kind ever alert must be,
Watchful to meet some secret lurking strife,
And who from toil and care were never free.
And yet we know that they in younger days,
In luxury amid the haunts of men,
Had seen the good and learned and shared the ways
Of civil life where modern thought had been ;
Were learned in schools, the precious worth they knew
Of letters, language, and the priceless boon
Of education, art, and culture too.
And now their girl was apt and learned soon.

The household duties and the needle deft
The mother taught her with a watchful care
To card and spin and fill the even weft
On home-made loom the father fashioned there.
And more of art, her cunning needle wrought
In brilliant colors, as if willing light
Had been divided and its beauty caught
And put on canvas in a picture bright,—
The thousand tints that in the dewdrops swing,
Or brilliant sparkles that the diamonds bring.
Modest and worthy, patient, meek, and mild,
E'en in this forest, she's a cultured child.

Ten years go by at this their lonely home,
Far from such things as make up human life,
Receiving only what may chance to come,
Be it of good or ill, of joy or strife.

Crawford grew strong and fortune favored him
With lands and great possessions for his toil.
The memory of his struggles now grew dim,
His enterprise brought fortune from the soil.
And for the good of state he bore his share,
And in great councils he was welcome there.

Could I relate it or with cunning pen
Tell what their cares, their hopes, their joys have been,
Picture that home, draw out its many scenes,
It would portray some of life's fairest dreams.
The little girl who once with prattling tongue
But lisped her joy when on her father's knee,
Or, from some fear, more tightly to him clung,
Was now a maiden fair as fair could be.

We come upon her in the summer day.
She knows not of our presence, neither dreams
That other watchers than the glinting beams
Of softened sunshine, in their wanton play,
Dare look upon her 'neath the gnarled oak.
She waits for something or some one perchance;
Something expected, in her eager glance,

Her nervous actions easily bespoke.
She leans against its rifted, riven side,
Her eyes are playing with her rosy feet
Where they their image in the waters meet,
In crystal pool that laves them in its tide.

Her silken tresses, gathered o'er her brow,
Parted so fair, the witching line we trace,
So void of art and yet of such sweet grace,—
A woman's line of beauty then as now.
Her well-shaped arms, with many a dimple shown,
Are wreathed in grace. Her eager fingers find
Among some flowers relief for busy mind,
In thoughts that now are sweetly all her own.
In silent musing 'neath the old oak-tree
She naiad stands. The shadows softly creep.
Even the sunshine seems as if asleep !
Nature's a slave, nor wishes to be free.

In face so young and fair, of such soft mould,
So sweet her features and so full of love,
We almost read the secrets as they move,
We almost guess her thoughts as yet untold.
She moves apace,—it seems a charmèd spot,—
Her eyes to heaven. We feel the simple spell.
The daisy leaf must her near future tell.
We can but wish good fortune be her lot.

She pulls the petals from the daisy head,
And counts them one by one, her rosy lip
Moving the while, as the white fragments slip
Through her soft fingers to a watery bed.

But startles now, a blush steals o'er her face.
Up through the valley rings a bugle note.
The postboy comes ; his calls in cadence float,
Their trilling echoes filling all the place.
He comes on trembling steed nor slows his pace,
Till 'neath the oak with branches spreading wide
He leaves the saddle and is at her side,
With crimson chasing crimson in his face.
Their meeting eyes alike are turned aside,
The flame that burns in either is so bright,
It pains yet fills the other with delight.
Neither dare see what neither one would hide.

But why this feeling, let us now inquire.
They met before as week on week came round,
And until now as if on equal ground,
Chatting and laughing to their hearts' desire.
They know they love each other e'en so well
To meet was pleasure, and to part was pain,
And absence long until they meet again ;
But now so changed. The reason who can tell ?
His furtive glances dare not meet her eye,

The tears that sparkle on his quivering cheek,
The parting lips that would but dare not speak,
The smiles that come and then so quickly fly.

He bears no more, but falling on his knee,
Grasping her hand, he looks full in her face,
And she may read whatever love may trace,
Or what the throbings of his heart may be,
Clear through those eyes into the heart's deep core,
Into love's chambers deeper than appears,
In the warm friendship of the flying years :
Less is not love and love is nothing more.
He clasps her hand, and with the pressure, see !
The smile returns and either face again
Is far too bright to harbor aught of pain.
Though now in bonds, they both are doubly free.

We catch the secret, why so changed to-day.
“ Mizpah ” we read on ring of golden ore,
On finger that was ne'er in bonds before.
In plighted troth now love asserts its sway.
It was expected and her keen, sharp eye
Was far too wary for his cunning art,
To size the finger when her beating heart
Half gave consent and yet did half deny.
He often told her of the golden band
The city damsels wore, when plighted troth

Joined into one the trusting hearts of both,
Showing the finger, fondling with her hand.
He wrote the letters of the mystic word
With trembling fingers in the roadside sand,
Within the limit of a circling band,
Sentence whose meaning she had never heard.
Why need I tell you what these moments bring ?
These parting moments ; how like light they fly !
And with the lovers they are quickly by.
The mail must haste like bird on swiftest wing.
And need we see the lovers when they part ?
The smile, the kiss, the tear on either cheek
Together mingle and together seek
The heaving bosom nearest to his heart.

Words have no meaning when they would express
The feelings of the soul ; so full of joy,
And deep emotions, that they must employ
The salty fountains of our deep distress.

XI

A NOTHER horse, fresh from the stall, was brought,
Saddled and bridled for the mail. Its freight
Was for the hundred throbbing hearts that wait

Its early coming. Should they be forgot ?
Not for a moment. Duty always found
The postboy first and always at his post,
Through storm and sunshine. It was all his boast,
To bring the mail just as the time came round.
And who would stay it ? Who recreant prove,
That feels the yearnings of the human heart ?
Not one who takes with man the nobler part,
Or feels within his soul the joys of love.
The well-worn mail-pouch on the saddle strung,
If it could speak and tell the words it bears,
How much of love, how much of grief and cares,
That never dare to pass the human tongue !

He leaves her side, and in the saddle now
Leaps with such ease, we know that he must feel
Prepared for all that duty may reveal ;
With neither doubt nor fear upon his brow,
Bids her adieu, yet fondles with her hair,
While the quick muscles of his noble steed,
Like bowstrings draw e'er she is fully freed.
He flies like arrow from the hand so fair.
We might read secrets in the lips that move,
Or let our fancy free in those bright eyes ;
But it were traitor's work, e'en to surmise
The heart's full ecstasy of perfect love.

She listened till the echoes ceased to come
In faintest murmur, and she listened long.
And now we hear her trilling lovely song,
As with light heart she sped away for home.
And as she went, in rapture of sweet voice,
Rang out the song and in angelic strain
The echoes float in cadence back again,
Till everything in melodies rejoice!
Her father met her and her mother, too;
Amazed they waited at the cabin door;
Such music they had never heard before;
To them the voice, as well as song, was new.
They knew she sang, as sweet as singing bird;
Had listened to her when she'd steal away,
Trilling some strain that made the echoes play
From cliff to cliff, repeating every word.

She was their child, their only one, their care,
But now how changed! A woman in their eyes
So like a fairy from some quaint disguise!
So bright, so happy, and so more than fair.
Her father pleaded that she sing once more
The new-learned song and tell him what sweet bird
Had taught his darling, for he never heard
So sweet a song from any throat before.
She, blushing, told him never bird so fleet,
Or one so fair as this one, sought these bowers,

Or one so good gladdened the passing hours,
Unless by chance the carrier dove he meet.
E'er he found answer or his lips could move,
A flood of music came as from the spheres,
Immersing all in ecstasy and tears.

So sweet, so thrilling, was her song of love,—
The postboy's song,—can we repeat the strain?
Our simple words were like the twanging lyre
A Patti spurns when, with her soul on fire,
Her melody holds all else in disdain !

Mercury on wingèd feet,
A messenger went forth.
I, on charger quite as fleet,
With messages of far more worth,
To the poor mortals on the earth,
Fly through the hail and sleet !
No halt or rest for me !
Like bird on tireless wing,
I take the lines that cross the sea,
And span the world, and with my art
Wrap in one bundle every heart,
Their joy and sorrowing !
Now merry, merry, I will be !
Who knows the joys I bear !
Whose throbbing heart I may set free

From chains of weary care?
Or what kind promise may be there
 For you, if not for me?
 Then merry, merry, I will sing,
 And by my fleetness prove
How willing I glad tidings bring!
And if I could do more,
 Spread e'en from shore to shore
 Nothing but joy and love!

Father and mother in amazement stood,
For until now their girl a child appears;
Only a girl she seemed these passing years,
But now confessed in perfect womanhood.
And they, no doubt, had hoped that it might be,
With the full time that steals so silent on
(Yet little dreaming how the time had gone),
The favored one be no one else than he.
And now they are so full of thankfulness
And proud withal, the quivering of the cheek,
E'er she had finished, their full hearts bespeak,
And hope's fruition to its full excess.

The tell-tale song, like strains of music sweet,
Or the smooth rhythm that stops not at the bars,
But glides as if unfettered by the jars
Of human fingers, makes the song complete.

THE WILLEY VALLEY



Or like the drops that fleck the window pane
Until, too full, in untried paths they start,
Glide near each other, then together dart
Into a whole that cannot part again.

Again they listened. Through the valley stealing,
There came a note guided by human art
Of violin, played with such tender feeling,
Its every strain stole softly to the heart.

So sweetly soft, it floated on the breeze,
So wildly plaintive from the forest trees !
'T was often heard, when stilly night came on,—
The Hermit's tribute to the parting days,
So like a prayer to the great Holy One,
A heart's devotion, and a Maker's praise !
And hark ! The echoes in soft laughter swell
From the great wood, "*'Tis well ! 'tis well ! 'tis well !*"

Blushing, she met her father's roguish smile,
That now made merry on his sunburned cheek.
O'er full, yet he must play the wag awhile,
Act more than words could ever dare to speak.

Again the sun was sinking in the west,
Again old Willey wore a golden crown,
All was at peace, the valley was at rest.

From yonder heights music came floating down,
Music so soft it seemed the murmuring tone
Of falling water on the mountain-side.
And hark ! another voice joined with her own
In evening prayer and with the Hermit guide
To the Almighty, who through all their life
Their trust had been, whether in good or ill.
“ Guard us this night, from every care and strife ;
Be Thou the Rock that must defend us still ;
Be Thou our Refuge; let no danger come
Upon the dear ones of this humble home.

“ Remember me, the wayward, wandering child,
Who knows no home or can a shelter share
But with the beasts roams o'er these mountains wild !
Remember us and have us in Thy care !
Bless all our land and let us with Thee dwell !
Give us Thy peace, who doeth all things well !”
Nothing was said, though much they 'd like to tell,
With hearts o'erflowing, as we see two friends
Stammer and halt in what their love depends.
They separate as if by magic spell,
Fearing to speak lest, if perchance the tongue
Was not attuned to that seraphic strain,
Its might be lost and never come again,
Like songs of dreamland, never to be sung !
Then in memories of the happy past,

Fell into musings that were rich and sweet.
Planning he thought, and thinking made complete.
What were but dreams, were purposes at last !

XII

HIS daughter was his pride, and in her song
Or simple ditty, ever sung so sweet,
Of all the world this their own fair retreat
Seemed full and more of music from her tongue.

Only his Mary, Mary of the Glen.
Thus was she called. She claimed the name her own ;
Its beauties had part of her beauties grown,
And she the fairest of its treasures then.

Such musings Crawford now would oft repeat,
And the full blooming of his daughter's love
Seemed through them all and over all to move :
Their charms made her, and she made them complete.

He listened with her for the bugle note
Far down the valley, ringing out so clear.
He loved the echo, loved to hear it float,
To greet the postboy when he did appear ;

The dashing hoof, the panting, foaming steed,
The sturdy gallop when he came in view.
A noble youth, we may his features read.
Where'er we see him, everything is true.

She smiling took the packet from the hand.
He stayed a moment, then away again.
She bade him speed, but lingered still to stand,
And watch him until watching was in vain.

The lad, we doubt not, in the father's eyes
Had no great faults, and promised to become
A worthy husband for his valued prize,
A more than welcomed guest to this their home.

And no mean choice, for his hard service proved
That life meant something, all was not in vain.
To brave such hardships was what Crawford loved,
And it was noble from his honest plane.

Then his kind way, to ever bear in mind
Such errands as the weakest dare to ask,
Revealed the place an honest heart to find,
A kindly hand for every honest task.

We know his labor, meet him face to face.
May we not see in him a noble type

Of such as find the fruit, e'er it is ripe,
For his successors in the coming race?

And when we meet him, can we but admire
His noble bearing, though perchance we see
Him at his best when all that's good may be
Fully awake in love's ambitious fire?
We follow him from Portsmouth by the sea,
Over the mountains, through the crooked trail,
To logging camp, to hamlet in the vale,
Wherever human habitation be.

Men, in those early days, had settled there,
As such men do, so like a rolling stone
That tumbles in the brook and rolls alone,
Till accident it from its course may bear.

Some for adventure, some with hope of gain,
Eager to flee the toils and cares of life,
Where avarice mingles in the human strife,
And poverty must plead and plead in vain.

And many more, on that long, weary road,
When forced to lay a dear one in the mould,
'Mid grief and sorrow that can ne'er be told,
They with their lost one make this their abode.

Thus all the way from Portsmouth by the sea,
Over the mountains to the mighty river
Whose toiling waters in the sunshine quiver,
As though no falls or rapids dared to be,—

The same green waters that in one fell sweep,
From the great lakes make manifest their birth,
As in loud roar Niagara shakes the earth,
Now lull a thousand sunny isles to sleep.

Great granite mountains had long stood between
This river and the wild Atlantic's shore.
The Notch discovered, they were bars no more;
Through the great woods a living pulse was seen!

Time flies apace, and in this fair retreat,
As near the odorous flower the air takes on
The sweetness of the rose, so here we meet
Life full of joy as Mary's self has grown.

A pleasant word to greet the tired one,
A smile to cheer the careworn and oppressed,
A hand to help when work was to be done,
A ceaseless care to give the weary rest.

And here, amid the mountains, every day
Such graces found employ; for past their door

Many a traveler eager on his way
Met some mishap or hurt or danger sore,—

The emigrant bound for the distant West,
His family and goods in one great van
(The wondrous lakes the object of his quest,
The West was then within such narrow span).

Among the crowd, full often there appeared
Some thankless villain, who to flee his crime
Or punishment, the only thing he feared,
Made over free at this wild place and time.

Crawford, alert and honest, knew full well
What justice meant, and oft his rugged hand
In heavy vengeance on such miscreant fell.
Their sentence only needed his command.

If noisy, they found silence gave them peace;
If braggart, a rough shaking made them feel
That such a shaking would not bear increase,
And quickly quenched their most vehement zeal;

If found when thieving near to his abode,
A jury summoned gave the verdict there,
And the vile culprit worked upon the road,
E'en the full sentence, honest, true, and fair.

Accused of crime, the guilty one must wait,
Go down to Portsmouth, meet the laws' demand ;
For penal crimes were matter of the State,
And justice was the bulwark of the land.

So thieves and knaves that chanced upon the road
Were meek and gentle when they passed his door,
And seldom cared to visit his abode
If they had chanced to visit it before.

The road was safe, nor sleuth-hound would pursue
More sure than he a scoundrel in his crime,
And every secret hiding-place he knew,
As well each path that did the mountain climb ;

And should, by chance, some venturous villain dare
Flee to the wood, the Hermit he would meet,
And oftentimes find a harder lot to bear.
There was no place to which he could retreat !

XIII

MARY had suitors ; one so very fair
Must have admirers every passing day.
In truth (the stories do so much declare),
Each youth that came was loath to go away.

Among them all, was one of noble mien,
With ample fortune, in the city bred.
He saw her, loved her, yet he loved in vain.
She was betrothed. He heard the truth with dread.
This should have been enough, — her honest word,
The full outgushing of a constant heart.
But no. Within his subtle heart was stirred
A jealous passion, that would gain with art.

He had of wealth abundance and to spare,
And should he not some little offering make,
Mark of esteem for her most tender care
Of the distressed or even for their sake ?
Such words prevailed. His costly gifts she wore.
The same conditions e'er increased the store.

He came as often as returning spring,
Remained till snow was on the mountain side.
He had sweet voice and would with Mary sing
Until his love he could no longer hide.
He knew she loved and was beloved in turn,
And loved so well, even betrothed indeed.
He hoped and let his growing passion burn
Until in bonds he'd go where'er it led,
And trembled with the thought, though never yet
Did his attention more than smile beget.

They sang together. Each composed a verse,
Fitting the music to the unwrit line;
Impromptu would in melody rehearse
Whate'er their minds of beauty could combine.
These scenes so lovely could not but inspire
Or stir the senses of a noble soul,
And hers poetic burned, — a glowing fire.
E'en inspiration was in her control.

And he was too of sympathetic turn,
And clothed his words with all the flowers of thought,
Yet through them all we often may discern
The one deep secret in his soul inwrought, —
A passion that would bear the prize away
At any cost. The time may come, we fear,
The coveted denied, why not a prey ?
Who yields to passion, runs its full career !

He knew of her betrothal and her love,
And well he knew of her fond lover's trust.
Why not for him the sacred trusting prove
An empty promise, written in the dust ?
Honest and fair he seemed in every way ;
He had the trust of all, none more than she.
Her boon companion was for many day,
In all her pleasures he was ever free.
Once at the dawn, they mounted horse to speed

Up mountain pathway, trying which could lead.
He dared to ask her love. Abashed, in pain,
Startled, she told him that could never be,
Then proudly bade him never ask again,
Or think to seek a hand that was not free.

“And were I free, my heart has never known
A thought or feeling that would to you bend ;
There is but one, the only one alone,
I ever loved as other than a friend.
And if you would my friendship still retain,
You must not dare to seek my love again.”
So weeks sped on, and he was from that day
Seemingly happy as he e'er had been.
The hope he held had seemed to pass away,
His presence added pleasure to the Glen,
And he became so loyal in their eyes,
So good in council, and so fast a friend,
That to despise him, was them to despise,
And to defend him, was them to defend.

The springtime comes, and with it comes again
The harbinger of joy, the singing bird.
The valley, which so long in bonds hath lain,
Awakes the morn; the murmuring song is heard,
The sighing zephyrs and the babbling brook.
The morning light is a rich mellow gleam,

The hazy mist, that hangs in quiet nook,
So gentle we might fear it be a dream,—
A lovely dream ; but ringing out so clear
We catch the note of rare melodious song.
We almost hope the fairies will appear
And to their castles bear the notes along.

Song to the clouds in Mary's sweetest voice,
Intoned with chorus of tunes so rare
Nature itself in the song must rejoice,
Giving or learning its sweetest charms there.
Hear it ! To write it were folly indeed !
What can I write on a mirror of light
But with a diamond, where he who would read
Can see but a scratch, my hand but a blight ?
Write it ? Why listen ! The echoes that trill !
Notes of the birds in the song are amazed !
Trembling, wavering, the valley they fill ;
The clouds take the theme, — in gold they are blazed !

THE SONG OF THE CLOUDS

Clouds of the morning, ye come at my call.
Gather your host, for the morning is near.
Climb, catch the rays that so speedily fall,
Clothing in purple the mists that are there.

Clothing in purple and decking in gold,
Those that are first in its beauty enrolled ;
Clothing in purple and jewels of light,
Those that are farthest from shadow and night.

Thus it is ever, and ever should be.
That which is first, seeking highest to rise,
Nearest to heaven God's presence shall see,
Reaping the richest reward of the skies.

Even a prince, if he fail here on earth
To make his first choice that which is of worth,
Will find to his sorrow the purple he wears
Is only a weight that will add to his cares.

Her voice is still. The echoes, warbling, float
And frolic with so good and sweet a song,
From cliff to cliff resounding every note,
As if her voice gave everything a tongue,
And now another catches up the song,
In plaintive cry. His soul is in his voice.
We listen while the strain he doth prolong
So pleasantly, we in the song rejoice.

“Your simple theme and story seemeth wise.
The best and noblest reach the highest plane,
Where there are beauties only for their eyes,
And treasures only such as rise may gain.

The zephyrs woo the clouds that they adore.
Be like them. With me go from shore to shore,
Visit the palace where are gentle hearts,
So full of joy amidst the royal arts.
Be like them now and all the world enjoy.
Come to my home beyond the rolling sea,
And in sweet pleasure all thy time employ.
From every care thou surely wilt be free.
E'en more than this, and thou shalt have to give
Abundance to the poor that near thee live,
Enough to keep thy goodness in employ,
In breathing on the troubled world thy joy."

" Be like the fickle cloud? Ask me, O no!
Not if my path with diamonds you bestow.
Go see the world? With you travel it o'er?
And leave the dear one, dearer far to me
Than richest mines with all their golden store?
Better in want in yon fair valley be."

We see the youth fall suitor at her feet,
An urgent one and more than beardless boy.
" Can you not love me, pray, while I entreat?
Or must you all my fondest hopes destroy?"
Startled, she turns, as if to flee in fear,
Stripping her fingers from his grasping hand.
A flush of anger drives away the tear;



GIBBS'S FALLS

Her voice in fury utters her command.

“ Villain, begone ! what mean you by this thing ?
You dare insult me ? ” Now her strength returned.

“ Despised, get hence ! thy presence here will bring
A punishment that thou hast never learned.”

“ That Thou Hast Never Learned ” in voice so clear
Some one in ambush slowly doth repeat.

Some one unknown to either one is near ;
And now between them moves a form so fleet !

It stops not, speaks not, and is quickly lost
In the thick wood, as if by accident

The presence had been only thrown across
A purpose that seemed evil in intent.

The lover shrank; he heard and saw too plain,
In that wild figure who had crossed his path,
A power against whom plotting were in vain,
A dangerous foe if he awaked his wrath.

The youth repented then his eager hold ;
Shrinking in shame, he asked her to forgive
His hasty deed, his act so mean and bold,
That he might hope to even dare to live.

Full well he knew no echo did repeat
The awful words whose meaning he could read.
Could he escape ? He hardly dared retreat,
But crept away like culprit in his deed.

Startled, she turned, like fawn from coming fear.
Through the thick forest, like a flying bird,
Mere flashing glimpses of her do appear;
Her tread so light, but crackling twigs were heard.
She had escaped and at her home below
Was by her father, safe from every foe.

This burst of passion taught her for defense
That e'en the sweetest tongue a heart might hide,
And at the best be gentle for pretense,
A snare from which a viper's fang might glide !

In spite of this he still remained a guest
About the house, but from that very day
Her manner changed might set his heart at rest,
Had he ne'er hoped to bear the prize away,
And yet he stayed until the winter came,
And came again with the returning spring.
Hopeless, yet hoping, he remained the same,
And richer presents still was wont to bring.
Mary refused them all and would not keep
The smallest token, proffer as he would,
Not e'en for friendship's sake. The wound so deep
Had raised such fears as would not be subdued.
Although he pleaded with a sigh and tear,
She turned to all a deaf and listless ear.

“ Cannot your friendship my poor heart defend ?
Go blame the light that glitters on the wave ;
So coldly greeted, yet its beauties blend
To waves’ behest. The light is but a slave,
Silvers each ripple as in haste it flies ;
Glitters the brightest in the darkest stream.
In a wild dance, ’t is whirling in surprise,
Adding the lustre of its silver beam.
Cannot your friendship my poor heart defend ?

“ I ask no more than to remain a friend,
Though my sad heart must still some envy bear
The favored one, who wins so fair a prize.
With his good fortune, tell me, can’t I share
The goodness of a friend ? Do not despise
Me, who for loving you must have his love.
Let us be friends and purest friendship prove.
I ask no other favor than to be
Of service to you and the one you love.
All that I have is yours, my wealth is free,
If only thus my friendship I may prove.

“ Your lover thinks not I could do him spite.
I thought to wrong him, but now let me prove
How well I can an injury requite,
How nobly pay a debt I owe to love.

And here he comes to answer in your stead.
I will acquaint him, show him all my heart ;
Accept his wrath in vengeance on my head,
If he will not forgive and take my part.”

The story was repeated word for word.
“ In penitence, I own the ill I meant,
But full forgiveness you can well afford.
Since you are chosen, you may be content.”
This healed the wound and amply made amends :
The three from thenceforth were the fastest friends.

XIV

THREE was another who came with the spring,
Of stranger mien ; he had been there before.
His actions rude, his words, like hornets sting.
A dread came with him in the darkened door,
A human shadow, e'er a mystery,
As if his life had neither aim nor plan.
He, the unknown, without a history,
Was ill disposed to every fellow man.

He often came and strangely disappeared,
Forcing attention, and seemed to bring
Some bane about him until he was feared,

And ever treated as an evil thing.
'T was he the wolves pursued, on that wild night ;
And it was he whose frown repaid the care.
So ill his presence, they all felt delight
To see him go and know he was not there.
He seldom spoke, but acted as if mute,
Did not some passion fierce force him to speak,
Curse or complain, if something did not suit,
Master or maid abusing, strong and weak,
Abusing most who gave him most of care,—
From him the best had most of wrong to bear.

He forced his presence here and made a claim,
Because of the sweet grace and tender care
That dealt so kindly with him when he came,
Excusing much that others would not bear.
Once when alone in sullen sentence flung,
“ Mary, my love — ” But hark ! the echoes ringing
Drowned every word that issued from his tongue.
A voice in fury in wild measure singing,
“ Avaunt ! Avaunt ! ” The echo died away.
She says “ Begone ! ” He dares no longer stay.
The host was kind ; but kindness had its bounds.
He heard his mutterings and it seemed ill ;
For kindness, these were unbecoming sounds
To hear from one who in all else was still.

Sick when he came, he seemed, as he found strength,
To grow more fierce, more ready to complain,
Until all patience reached its bounds, at length ;
And go he must, nor shade their door again.

He knew full well the meaning of that word,
And saw the purpose in that angered face ;
Knew what was meant, though but one sound was
heard,
And went, the very image of disgrace.

“ Fear not,” the father said. “ My eyes are keen,
And see a foe as surely as distress ;
These arms are strong to crush a thing so mean
As bring the wounded here for you to bless.”

He called his men from stable and from field.
A motley group, they came from far and near.
They liked to have such summons and to yield
A quick obedience when the call they hear.
He called them often and where'er he led
They dared to follow, be it wolf or bear,
And do his bidding be whate'er the deed,—
A pleasant hunt or danger, toil, or care.

But now they see a purpose in his mood,
A quivering of his lip that seemed to speak

Determination boding little good
To that, whate'er it be, he chose to seek.

By merest chance not one of them had seen
What had transpired the early morning there,
Or ill for him it surely would have been,
Whose hate had been the cause of all this care.
A passion rages now in Crawford's breast !
A something full of dread had crossed his path !
The man, so calm till now, could find no rest ;
So gentle always, now was full of wrath.
He stood perplexed and hardly seemed to know
What next to do, for this was a new game.
Instead of wolf or bear, man was his foe.
And why a foe ? What reason could he name ?

He could not leave it to their prattling speech,
That Mary had been harmed, and he in fear
Had sought their aid. They would avenge the breach.
Who ventured this a monster would appear,
For much they loved the maid so good and fair.
Who dared to yoke an evil with her name,
Must the crude justice of the mountains bear, —
A justice that was far from being tame.

He thought of this and hesitated more,
Vexation plainly stamped upon his face.

So many passions now his features wore,
Of purpose there was scarcely left a trace.
Uncertain, timid, leaning on his gun,
Stamping the ground, his head in study bowed !
They wondered at him. What was to be done ?
In expectation, see the eager crowd !
Some dreadful thing they feared. Why does he wait ?
This is the first they knew him to debate.

It was a study for an artist now,
An honest man moved by a sense of fear,
So many passions flitting o'er his brow,
Now in a rage, and then a smile appear.
They nudge each other, wondering what 't can be,
What dreadful thing has come into the Glen,
Look well about them, lest calamity
Stretch out a hand and seize them there and then.
At last o'ercome, he could not say a word,
Goes to the house and leaves them as they are,
In explanation not a sound is heard ;
Amazed, they look the picture of despair.

Their master was not wont to call them out
Unless upon occasion when he knew
Of some great danger in the woods about,
Or foe which he alone dared not pursue.
But he to-day had called them every one,

And still was speechless, and seemed full of fear.
What was the cause? What evil had been done?
Surely some more than awful thing was near.

They felt, when he would shrink, it was no crime
In them to fear their meeting such a foe.
Brave was their boast of such and such a time,
When he had called and they did willing go;
How they had chased a bear into her den,
And with him brought a panther home, a prey;
Had followed him where packs of wolves had been,
Helped from the sheep to drive the lynx away.

Patrick, the hostler, thought it strange indeed,
Some weighty thing was there, or thereabout,
Goes to the kitchen, where he goes in need,—
The cook's black bottle solves full many a doubt.
Their wits are opened by the draught, and each
Goes deep to fathom what has passed to-day.
Imagination takes its widest reach
And in great reason has its broadest play.

Of goblins, ghosts, and such wild themes as these
Stories were told. The frightened authors shook
With abject fear, with trembling in their knees,
Till stammering tongue the o'erwrought tale forsook.
As once I tried their picture to portray

In wondering group, e'er I a line had done,
Like frightened sheep they all had run away
And left me but the cook to work upon.
Would it were in my power to paint it here,
To draw a picture when the master left,
A Hogarth vision surely would appear,
A group in wonder, of all sense bereft.

XV

THEY gather in the kitchen on the hearth
 Of the great fireplace, massive, broad, and deep,
Where oft before they gathered in their mirth,
But this night there was neither mirth or sleep.
The superstitious had uncanny fears,
The boastful were in dread of more than death,
Surmised such things as from the weak drew tears,
And every word came as with bated breath.
So hours flew on, the group around the fire,
Drift into story that time may lighter fly,
Some that were told them, some experience dire,
Some the pure fiction their ambitions try.

And I would picture in colors bright,
The dingy kitchen, and the great wood fire,
The earnest group bathed in its sparkling light,

The story teller, of whom none will tire.
It was the day before the kitchen range ;
A cheerful fire was glowing on the hearth,
Beneath a crane with hooks and links so strange,
I recollect it well back near my birth.
The mantle shelf that seemed then very high
Brings home strange memories of boyhood days,
When for some treasure many schemes I 'd try,
Yet unattained the treasure met my gaze.
Oh, pardon me these wandering thoughts of home !
They come upon us in maturer years,
So full of joys wherever we may roam, —
The brightest pictures seen through all our tears !

And then the arch was even with my chin.
Deep in the ashes glowed the great backlog ;
The crane askew surely hard used had been, —
The broken links were mended with a tog.
Pot-hooks, crane-hooks, and hooks of every kind,
Begrimed with soot, were ranged along the beam,
And crooked andirons on the hearth we find,
With polished heads to throw a sparkling gleam,
That flickers from the mound of glowing coals,
Now almost smothered in the ashen heap,
While curling smoke in fitful cloudlets rolls,
Spangled with stars that from the embers leap.

A real fireplace of which sires may tell,
With all its beauty now forever gone ;
Only in story may its beauty dwell,
A thing that served and well its duty done !
We see above along the rafters hung
Such tidbits as might make a gormand stare ;
Smoked beef and bacon, venison and tongue,
And knots of savory herbs and roots were there.

The kitchen was a dingy-looking room,
Although the cook was tidy, neat, and clean ;
The floor showed well the service of a broom,
And the bright kettles in their places seen.
Before the hearthstone sat the group, all full
Of the deep wonders Michael was portraying.
Resting his foot upon a three-legged stool,
With many passions in his features playing,
He spoke of what to him was real life.
He told of what he knew ; indeed, to prove
It truth, gave all the dates and scenes of strife,
Vouched for by all in nod with every move.
And when the crisis of the tale was near,—
The horrid part that was to chill the blood,—
His voice sank low in whisper and a tear
In either eye, a sparkling brilliant, stood.

His listening audience were as still as death,

Bent eager on him, staring in his eyes,
With gasping mouth and almost bated breath.
“ ‘T is done ! ” he said. “ The monster bird doth rise ! ”
They all look up as pleased yet half aghast,—
Look where he points, as if to see the flight.
“ The victim is released and goes her way.
The bird flies upward, circling in the air.
I watched its flight throughout the whole long day,
And in the night among the stars ’t was there.”
Some gave full credence to the tale ; the rest,
Until his memory did the sequel bring,
An incident incredulous at best.
“ I saw a feather loosen from its wing,
Fall at a dizzy height with whirring sound.
I watched it fall, like arrow on its way,
And strike Mount Willard, part of which came down,—
The mass of rock is in the road to-day.”

His story ended with such simple grace,
The very truth seemed beaming in his face.

His auditors, in their secluded life,
Had learned to love and credit all such lore,—
Some mystery was linked with every strife.
To all he said they testimony bore,
Accounting thus for all the wondrous things
In uncouth story some poor poet sings.

And could we see him, as he then appeared,
Tall, slim, and bony, with rough tangled hair,
Free in the wind, with scraggy, wandering beard
Upon his face, like a young forest there,
We would not doubt his story in the least.
He served in stations both on land and sea ;
With little education was he blessed,
And superstitious as a man could be.
Wrecked on the sea, he had misfortune met,
And more than wrecked in port upon the land,
But in the woods he might a living get,
And stay with Crawford as his handy hand.

The feather, like the straw of ancient fame
That broke the camel's back, was far too great.
His listeners incredulous became ;
Smiles took their place on features so sedate.
The laugh came slow, but when it blurted out,
He with the rest joined in the merry shout.

They talked the morning o'er; asked Jacques, the guide,
If he by any process could explain
What reason made the master thus decide.
He hoped the morrow would make all things plain.
The master's reasons must be all his own.
When he asked help or even needed aid,

He ne'er before had indecision shown,
Or seemed of any living thing afraid.

“I have been with him, with him danger shared,
Have seen him take a lamb from a whole pack
Of hungry wolves when their fierce eyeballs glared
In threatening fury, when he drove them back.
He never flinched before, though death might be
On equal footing as an enemy.

“I ‘ve served him now for nearly fifteen years ;
And seen him every day and shared his toil ;
But until now, I ‘ve never seen his tears
Inwrought with danger that he should recoil
From anything. What it could be to-day,
That moved upon him or perplexed his mind,
Made him a childlike coward slink away,
Needs greater reason far than I can find.”

Jacques was no coward and knew naught of fear,
And, perhaps, now the first time in his life,
Harbored a dread of something very near,
A mystery, a dark, unfathomed strife.
He listened to the o’erwrought goblin tale,
Of monstrous bird that came to yonder height.
Its theme was such as with him would prevail
And give his wild imagination flight.

Most interested, he with open mouth
And outstretched neck, attended every word.
His Spanish blood, from the warm sunny South,
Was all afame when such a tale was heard.
His interest never flagged; for well he knew
Michael, the elder, was more wise than he.
He eager listened that he might pursue
The trembling victim and the sequel see.
And when o'erwrought the final did appear,
A smile o'erspread his features, full of fear.

The spell was gone,—the horrid spell that held
Them in its thrall was banished for the night.
In merry song their troubles they dispelled
And sought their rest, until the morning light.
They each resolved that with the rosy dawn
To know for certain what the care could be,
Relieve their master, fight till it be gone,
And he be surely from the danger free.

Thus break the sombre feelings of the night,
And each went merry to his wonted sleep,
But Steve and John, the barbers, in a fright,
Cringed near the fire, their wakeful vigils keep.
And Charles the cook, too fat to know a care
Of outdoor things,—was peacefully at rest
Upon the hearth in his great easy chair,

The frightened ones beside it are his guests.
Steve looked to John, in dread of the great room,
Dingy and dark, the fire was almost done.
They scan each other, shudder in the gloom,
Two helpless mortals, now so lost and lone.
A something dreadful their forebodings knew
The evening's terror doth them now pursue.
They look to Charles, but find there to their grief,
That he is gone in slumber so profound,
His heavy breathing may be some relief,
Though at the best a melancholy sound.
They creep beneath his chair, as kittens lay
Before the fire, watching its kindly glow,—
An owl by chance did down the chimney stray
In dreadful shape, it comes an awful foe.
And they arising with their might and main
Put the poor cook in jeopardy again.
Such uproar in the kitchen, soon brought out
All of the household, wondering what could be
The dread alarm, what it was all about,
Until the wondering, blinking owl they see.
The Spaniard's story of the awful bird,
The goblin owl, in jovial laugh is heard.

'T is early dawn, so full of beauty rare,
And merry laugh is ringing out so clear.
Patrick is telling to his mistress fair

The terrors of the night, the negro's fear ;
How John and Steve lay blinking at the stars
Under the chair where weary Charley slept,
Wishing their gold was melted into bars,
And then like chickens, for their finding kept.
When, as by chance an old gray owl flew by
Seeking for food or dainty bits of cheer,
Mistaken by the glimmer of their eye,
Swooped down the chimney to their mortal fear.

And much to Charley's hurt, for he was thrown
So hard and sprawling out upon the floor,
As would have broken, had he e'er a bone,
But being fat, it only made him sore.

And with a merry twinkle in his eye,
He told the story that had caused such fear,
Made his obeisance, as the maid went by,
Saying, " God bless her, girl so sweet and dear.
While in this valley one so fair as she
Welcomes the light, the lovely light of heaven,
Surely ne'er ghosts nor goblins dare to be.
Alone for such as she was Eden given."

Sometimes she seems too fair for this wild place.
Now hark ! her song is ringing through the trees.
Melody and poetry we trace ;

Her happy heart is floating on the breeze.
Nature itself joins with her in the singing, —
From yonder cliff her sweetest notes are ringing.

SONG TO THE MORNING

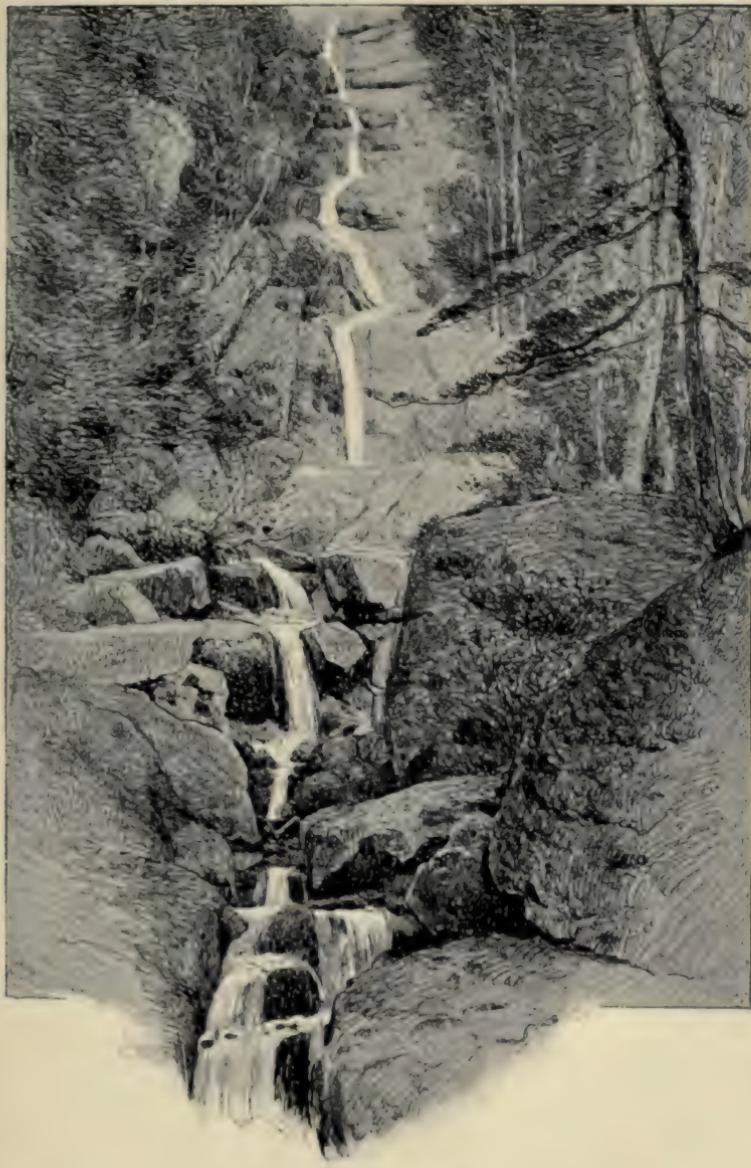
Morning so bright, morning so fair !
Moments my soul is leaping to be
Up on the mountain-side, in the pure air,
Part of its beauties with nature so free.
Mountains, I love them. Valleys mine own !
Where hath the sun on such loveliness shone ?

Morning so bright, morning so fair !
Hour when my soul builds its castles of light,
Wanders in cloudland with wish to be there.
This is my home in the valley so bright.
Mountains, I love them. Valleys mine own !
Where hath the sun on such loveliness shone ?

Morning so bright, morning so fair !
Go with thy beauty and clothe all the earth !
Go to the troubled thy comfort to share !
Give to the world of thy love all its worth.
Mountains, I love them. Valleys mine own !
Where hath the sun on such loveliness shone ?

Her voice grows still, the early breakfast horn
Blows its shrill note to call the household in.
Poor Steve and John sit at the door forlorn ;
Charley was lame, not quite himself again.
They here meet Crawford in his wonted mood,
He plans the labor for the day to each,
Some to the field, and others to the wood ;
Calls John and Steve with wonder in his speech,
And something merry twinkling in his eye.
Asks for their aid, though he will not enforce
Else than their work. But he has enterprise
Which to their honor they will seek, of course.
They bow, of course, and ready volunteer,
Alert to go, until the bidding comes, —
To scale yon cliff, and tell him where the deer
May be secured within a mile of home.
It was no easy task, but it would be
To most their ills a perfect remedy.

Their cheeks turn pale, they tremble in despair,
For it was Eagle Cliff, where the great bird
Kept sentinel, to strike who ventured there :
They were benumbed, and uttered not a word.
He came to their relief in his kind way,
And thought their labors weary and severe,
To watch each other all the long, long day
And shave, perhaps, a dozen men a year.



SILVER CASCADE

THE STAG HUNT

Now for the stag hunt ! No mean sport, 't is true.
Jacques, Pat, and Barney were the chosen men ;
Used to the sport, with Crawford will pursue
The startled game o'er mountain and through glen,
Through the deep gorge or on the mountain brow.
They know the runs and where to seek the deer.
They find the trail ; the sport commences now,—
The dogs are out, their steady bay we hear.
From where we stand, the scene is at our feet.
And see ! the stag goes vaulting through the trees,
So gracefully and like the wind so fleet.
He leads the race, it seems with perfect ease
Down through the Glen. At every open place,
With dogs not far behind, we see him fly.
They now are gaining on him in the race.
He turns at bay with fury in his eye,
Throws up his head and sniffs the morning air,
With wrinkled nostrils and with eyes aglow ;
Strikes with his feet the foolish hounds that dare
Venture so near as to receive the blow,
Strikes with his horns, and dashes with his might
Into the pack, and, throwing in the air
The first that comes, then straightens for the fight,
And trembling stands a living picture there.
But hark ! It is the rifle's sharp report.

In one wild leap he plunges — see, he falls.
The hunt 's successful, though it has been short,
And to return the horn in echo calls.
Patrick and Barney with the summons came,
And on their shoulders bear the weighty game.
Crawford and Jacques will still pursue the sport
And get a brace of partridges and grouse.
We guess their luck, we hear the oft report
And see them ladened as they near the house.

Lest I be tedious and my story tire,
Pray go with me and spend a summer day
With my companion, feed upon her fire,
Drink at her fountain, through her palace stray,
Bow at her altar, Nature so complete ;
Feel as I feel when on her virgin sod,
Shake off the sandals from thy weary feet,
And stand uncovered as before thy God.
It is the morning, and the streaming light
Sweeps o'er the mountain in a flood of glory.
Would my poor pen would take such heavenly flight
And make my poem pæan of all story !

There are strange wonders in these mountains wild,
Scenes that entrance the senses, scenes that hold
Our inmost love, by which we are beguiled
Into a world only by poets told,—

Beauties so rare the soul in longing seeks
A look beyond the coarser things of life,
A secret place where the pure soul may speak
With God, its Maker, beyond care and strife,
And where we see in all its purity
The works of God, immense, grand, and sublime,
And feel His hand lead us in surety
Into His realm beyond the reach of time.

See beauties that man's art hath never marred,
Hear tones so sweet as if they were of Heaven,
Rest on the solid rock that never jarred,
And feel a breath only for Eden given.

Yes, be alone upon Earth's virgin sod,
With our best self apart before our God.

Mountains sublime ! the rock-ribbed stays that bind
The mighty framework of this solid earth !
All Nature's forces free and unconfined,
God's royal gift to man in all its worth,—

A breathing-place where he may rest and pray,
And put for once our petty things away !

Come, gentle Muse ! give me the power to sing
In living measure what my eyes behold.
Bestow thy aid, assist me while I bring
This picture home, its loveliness unfold,—

The Willey Valley glowing at our feet,
A panorama wonderful, complete.

E'en at our feet, in misty space below,
So far below that pebbles, be they thrown
From baby hands, a thousand yards will go,
Cleaving the air before their fall is done,
So beautiful through copse and silent grove,
We see the Saco through the valley move.

The lovely Saco, but a tiny vein
That gurgles on and glitters in the sun,
A speck of silver here and there again,
A sparkling thread doth through the valley run,—
A thread the flying shuttle leaves behind,
Where in the woof rare beauties are combined.

I would attempt and sing in lofty strain
A worthy theme, a place of beauty rare,
A scene that brings the weary artist pain
So little of it answers to his care !

Or rather here there is so very much,
That of it all his pencil yields but touch.

Could I portray it, from the giddy height,
And bring to view what meets the eagle's range,—
Yon towering hills first bathed in morning's light,

And last at e'en from gold in shade to change.
Mysterious place, it must be even here
Is joined to earth the land that fills our dreams,
So bright, so fair, it robs us of our fear.
We almost hope to find it as it seems,
As when, but part awake, some lovely dream
Has led us through ne'er half its shiny way,
We close our eyes, hoping to catch a gleam,
Or win it back, or cause it to delay.

THE THUNDER SHOWER

We stand on Willard's cap of stone ;
Again another day is done.
Beneath us in the valley deep,
A cloud comes on with rushing sweep.
Like billows on an angry sea,
The Glen in fury seems to be,
While flash the lightning's awful glare,
Like glowing furnace blazing there.
And hark ! the thunder's awful boom !
As terrible as coming doom.
The solid mountains shake ;
The angry storm-clouds break,
And on the mountain's side
Like flying squadrons ride.

The winds wild rush. And now the sunbeams play
Upon ten thousand falls of water leaping,
The rising mists over the mountains stray,
And now the rainbow has them in its keeping!
'T was all below us, while above our head,
Only the pickets of the storm-cloud spread.

THE CHIEF

High on the mountain-side, a crimson stain
Assumes, oftentimes, a strange, fantastic form.
Though but the oozing of a mineral vein,
'T is fearful bloody after every storm,
And fond tradition has it in belief
It is the blood of a great warrior chief.
We see his wrinkled brow, with plumes widespread ;
In outstretched hand, his tomahawk all red.
A picture clear of chieftain in his wrath,
Strides from the mountain, in a bloody path !

CLOUDS' REST

There is another strange, wild place, Clouds' Rest,
So high it seems, beyond the reach of man ;
An ugly gash, in the great mountain's breast ;
And swathed in clouds, as it has ever been.
Tradition whispers strange, uncanny tales ;

MOUNT WILLARD



How 'neath that curtain, should we dare to go,—
A tragedy yon fleecy cloudlet veils,
Too horrible for mortal man to know !
And yet tradition hath another story.
'T is said it shields the portal that doth lead
Into the Indian's wigwam, full of glory ;
Into his happy hunting-ground, indeed.
And more, 't is said, who stands on yonder cliff
May see through fleecy clouds beyond, afar,
Numberless deer, and bear, and birds, as if
The hunter's paradise had pearly gates ajar.

Then, to the left, Mt. Webster, great and grand,—
A power unmoved like him of iron will,—
A mighty front of granite, it doth stand
So firm, old time hath wrought it little ill,
And here below, a cloud that fain would rest
In some recess upon the mountain-side.
Two bright cascades come leaping down its breast,
Like rival swains in race before a bride,—
Silver cascade, in wild and laughing leaps,
Bursts forth a beauty o'er the granite gray ;
A hallowed light its winding pathway keeps,
While prism bloom bedecks its glittering spray !
We feast our eyes from here, they are so plain,
On Webster's breast they hang a silver chain.

But listen now. A song with laughter ringing,
And sweeter echo than e'er heard before,
So clear it seems a thousand voices singing,
A thousand times, 't is echoed o'er and o'er!

THE SONG OF HOME

I would sing of home divine.
Fairer place, where can it be
Than this pleasant home of mine,
 Nestled in yon valley fair,
 Subject to all nature's care?
Yes, a pleasant home to me.

Here at morning's early light,
Up amid the clouds I go;
Watch the tripping Naiads so bright
 Leap from cliff to light upon
 Willey's solid side of stone.
Anywhere the clouds may go.

See! yon mountains cold and bare,
Glisten like to burnished gold,
And their chains of silver wear
 Where the laughing, leaping stream
 Comes to light from crease or seam.
Cloth of bullion we behold!

As we look, yon towering height,
'Neath a cloudy curtain's frill,
Glows in panoply of light !

Truly, there we seem to see
What if fretted it might be
With the riches God might will !

Now, we see the shades come on,
'Neath the sombre clouds that fly ;
Deep blue ether all has grown,—

Faint and vague it gathers still,
Deeper blue the valleys fill,
All appears dissolving sky !

But see, a flash ! the lightnings ply !
Hark ! the thunder's shaking tread !
And hear the wind, in saddening sigh !
And there below, the beating rain !
A thousand streams are in its train,
The storm is past, and in its stead

Through the cloud a rift appears,
And a golden fleece falls down,
Like sunshine in a mist of tears.
On it moves and rolls away,
Moving still without delay,
For a moment gold from brown !

Gold to brown, from brown to gray,
What a change our senses feel !
How we hoped it might delay
 In its beauty clothing ever,
 What might wear its robes so clever
And its loveliness reveal.

Then I cannot help but think
How like riches, how like gain !
Let it come from darkest sink,
 Man will quickly put it on ;
 Gather praise until 't is gone,
Be it idle, false, or vain.

Clouds they are, we see them fly ;
That which highest nears the sky
Is the place where longest last
 The rich beauties of the fleece,
 Catch the light that did increase,
Yes, increase and multiply.

Now the thick gray fogs of night
Feel the sun's advancing ray ;
Climb the gorge in hasty flight,
 Stealthily like flying thief,
 Ladened with golden sheaf
Where the sunbeams chance to play.

Far below us on light wing,
The great eagle sweeps in flight,
Gracefully his circles swing.

Now he darts like arrow sent,
Down to earth his course is bent,
Till we lose him from our sight.

Tell me not that there can be
On the earth another place
Where my heart could be so free !

Where so clearly we descry
Stepping-stones that lead on high,
Up a path God's fingers trace !

Tell me not of wealth or leisure,
That but wear the marks of pride !
Never could they stir the measure,
Never bring these thoughts so sweet,
Be at best a poor retreat
Where my soul could not abide !

The violin again in cadence swelling !
A flood of music burdens all the breeze
Like fragrance from a lovely blossom welling !
A thousand echoes catch it as they please,
A thousand echoes, aye ! ten thousand more
Gather it in as if 't were golden store,

And they were misers. See how long they cling !
Ten thousand thousand strains, as in a flood,
Catch up the song and in it sweetly sing !
And yet her song seems only to her God.

Nature rejoices in its harmony,
Giving assent as singer passes by !

We see her e'er the echo dies away
Far up the mountain on the rugged cliffs,
And at her side her little pony gray.
With head thrown out, the morning air he sniffs
And scents a danger that she does not see.
Happy she thinks herself from danger free.

But there above her on a gnarlèd limb
A panther crouching ready for a spring !
His wicked eyes with deadly purpose swim,
His reaching claws in nervous motion swing,
His swaying tail like serpent in the air,
His pointed ears, and from them we may trace
Over his back an ugly hedge of hair,
While scowls and wrinkles plough his ugly face.
Startled she sees him and in dread suspense
She is alone and there without defense.

A crash and now a rifle shot we hear !
The panther springs, but not with measured aim ;



EMERALD POOL

Far over her and o'er the rocks so clear
He goes a heap from whence none ever came,
A thousand feet below, where the tall spruce
Lift up their heads for nobler, better use.
The danger past, she lifts her hands to heaven,
And in sweet words her hearty thanks are given.

And dare we look down through the ether deep,
Over the rock, a dizzy height indeed !
There we will see the eagle in his sweep
In rapid course where scent of blood may lead !
She knew the rifle and she knew full well
It was the Hermit, and his strange conceit
Would hide him from her like a magic spell.
Wish as she might, her wish would meet defeat.
But hark ! the echo from the great wood ringing !
In joyous lay, he joins her in the singing.
Song throws ajar the very gates of heaven,
Revealing lands beyond the bounds of earth,
Sweet gratitude from inmost soul is given.
“What can I say of song of so much worth ?
As life is sweet to me, I can but feel
Thy phantom hand has rescued me from death.
My guardian friend, why wilt thou yet conceal
Thy kindly self ? I'll meet thee with my breath.
It is God's mercy that has brought thee here.
Perchance my song may bring thee words of cheer.”

SONG OF LIFE

What is life we hold so dear ?
Hung upon so slight a thread,
Where the fairest things appear
May be hidden what we dread !
Tell me, what is life, I pray,
But what's gathered in the way !

What is life we hold so fair
But a bauble that must break,
And resume its place in air ?
Have we not a higher stake,
Purpose richer in the sky,
Seeking, gaining, as we fly ?

What is life without an aim
But the bursting of a flower,
To return from whence it came,
Only blooming for an hour,
Unless we seek to make our heart
In life to be of heaven a part ?

What is life if not to be
Like the hands that held the piece,
Turning cruel death from me,

Helping who are hoping least?
And may we from this be found
With thee, where such deeds abound!

There are of interest places yet a score,
Worthy of better pen, I would portray
At Mary's home or near the cabin door;
But I must leave them to some future day,
Catch only such as in the story lead,—
More than enough with her, for me, indeed.

THE BIRTH OF THE SACO

Low in the notch, 'neath Willard's craggy brow,
From which the rocks have slid a thousand years,
Are sliding still, where mass on mass appears,
We almost fear the mountain's falling now!
A tortuous way, a dark and deep recess,
Womb of the Saco, where the infant river
First feels its life, making the mountains quiver!
Beneath its base, 't is writhing in distress.

SACO'S CRADLE

The Dismal Pool, another deep recess,
The Saco's cradle, where the new-born river

Feels the first ripple o'er its surface quiver,
And murmurs at the wild wind's harsh caress!

MARY'S LAKE

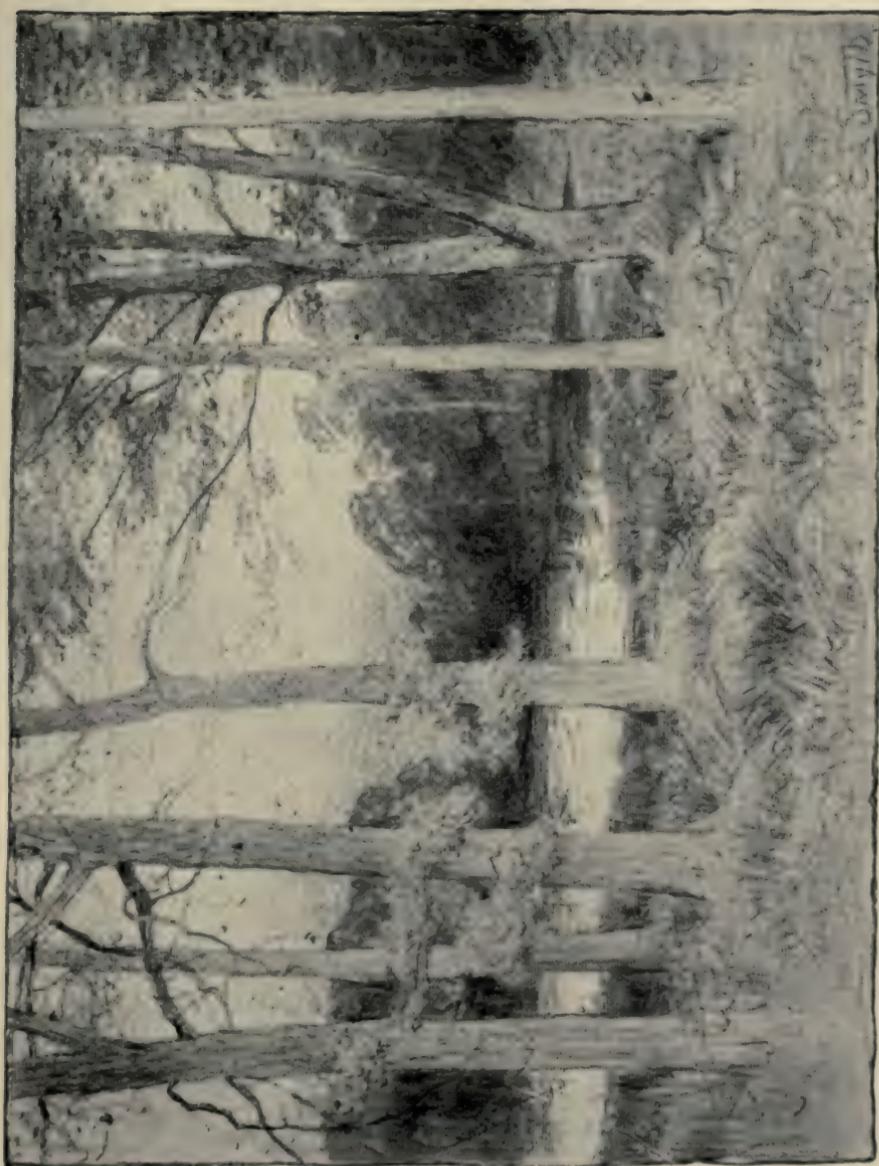
We must not leave the little lake unsung,
Called Crawford's Lake, beyond the rise of ground.
'T is where the Ammonoosuc first finds tongue.
'T was from its sides the echoes first were flung
 Of the wild Hermit's warning, so profound.

'T is Mary's Lake, a piece of clear blue sky,
 Set in a frame of forest, soft and green ;
Waters so sweet, we could not pass them by,
Nor would they leave us, even should we try, —
 Our memory is fretted with the scene.

Fretted, as light glints through a jewel rare,
 Revealing deep within its polished breast
All of the tints that are in nature's care,
All of the shades her richest beauties wear ;
 A very world of beauty is caressed.

A magic mirror, in the sunlight gleaming,
 So soft, we lose a sense of where we are ;
A mystic water, and as if 't were dreaming,

MARY'S LAKE



A thousand pictures on moving surface scheming,
It hangs a mirage in the empty air.

And in the sunlight, see its bosom quiver,
And soft blue mountains o'er its surface trace.
But now the fish the quiet waters shiver,
And in wild waves 't is running like a river ;
The hungry trout their weaker neighbors chase !

It is a lovely spot so near her home.
The runway of the deer leads to its edge ;
We watch them frolic, drinking as they come,
Swimming the lake, and sporting in its foam,
Not far below us, from this mossy ledge.

This is the place of Mary's fondest dreams ;
Here at the brookside, where is river born,
She was the sport of sunlight's laughing beams.
Here Cupid first entangled in his schemes
Her girlish heart ; here first his bonds were worn.

Yes, near the lakeside, 'neath the old oak-tree,
The Postboy wrote upon the roadside sand,
And gave the ring that bound and yet made free,
And made two hearts as happy as could be ;
Here was the future with its pleasures planned.

It is a sacred spot, and holds within
 Its fairy shadows all that life can give,—
A virgin nook, without a spot of sin.
Here maidens find the lines of love begin,
 Such lines as make them happy while they live.

I have a secret that is worth revealing,
 For it is said now, at the evening hour,
Who stays may hear the sweetest music stealing
Over the waters and prove the gentle feeling
 That wraps true lovers in its magic power.

THE LAKE OF THE CLOUDS

There is another lake of stranger form,
Petrel of the mountains, child of the storm,
Lake of the Clouds, high on the mountain-side,
 Deep in the crater of great craggy stone.
Not a green thing or life can there abide.
'T is lost in tempest; its wild foaming tide,
 Picture of death. Who goes there is alone.

The skurrying clouds in haste pass by;
Only the eagle with her piercing cry
In eyrie high her nestlings hide,
 And the deep moaning of the passing wind,

And the dull groaning of the rocks that slide
Or splash in fury in its foaming tide,
 Or grate each other, as they downward grind.

“Lake of the Clouds!” That strange, wild spot,
When seen will never be forgot!
Of all God’s work it seems alone,
 So dark, so dreary, without life,
So hard to reach, ’t is little known,
And seldom is its body shown,
 In crater full of storms and strife!

LAKE WILLEY

And still there is another lake,
High above Willey’s festered side.
Who sees it must a journey make,
And venture not without a guide.
’T is almost at the mountain’s top,
And its great reaches gather in
The strange, wild buttresses that drop
Where Willey’s peak does just begin.
’T is a wild place and on its shore
Are scenes but seldom met before.

The deer are drinking at its edge,
An eagle swoops its surface o'er,
A bear is prowling on yon ledge.
But hark ! the wind in sullen roar !
A storm in fury sweeps its breast.
Gone in a moment, and again
The lake is calm and all is rest,
And care and trouble all were vain.
'T is Willey pond and it is here
The sportsman still may find the deer

THE EMERALD POOL

Here is a beauty spot called " Emerald Pool,"
Hemmed in with rocks o'er which green moss is creep-
ing,
So soft, so shady, so delightfully cool,
We almost fancy Naiades or fairies sleeping.
And see just where the falling waters break !
Is it a dream ? We hardly feel awake.
Reflected from yon rock, in sunny light,
A picture fairer than from artist's care.
It might be Venus rising to our sight,
With the full train of her attendants there.

THE INDIAN LEAP

There are full many more such scenes as these.
If we could know the secret that they hold,
What cries of pain or joy have waked these trees,
What startling stories of them could be told !
Here " Indian Leap," a place so dark and lone.
A stream comes dashing o'er the mountain brow,
A precipice, a solid front of stone,
Its rushing waters high are screeching now.

And the tradition is that years ago
A brave young warrior climbed its dizzy height
In quest of game which he alone did know.
He and a bear engaged in fearful fight.
The beast was wounded and in maddened leaps
Rushed o'er the rock to sunny bench below,
Where anxious watch for him his damsel keeps —
The issue of his venture she would know.
The huge beast came in fury at her side,
And in blind rage struck what might meet his claw.
Alas ! the girl could neither fly nor hide.
Her lover quickly all her danger saw,
Grasped firm his knife, and by a fearful leap
He stood between her and the angry beast.
Sprang on the bear ; his knife in sturdy sweep

Soon put the raging fury there to rest.
We may imagine — tradition does not say —
What great reward fate brought him on that day.

THE TROUT STREAM

Nor would we pass the trout stream, pure and bright,
Head of the Saco, as it issues forth
From shady cradle in the rocky north,
And dances, leaping in the sunny light.

So free, it seems a wayward, wanton thing,
As blithely on a lullaby to sing.

Purling 'mid rocks and boulders all the way,
With here a pool and there a stretch so fair,
With shady nook that woos us to delay,
And yet again a deep, dark pool is there.

And sporting, leaping in these waters clear,
A swimming bevy of trout disappear.

Now for the sport of Isaac Walton's dreams!
Full well prepared with rod and reel and flies,
If deft we'll see the shining beauties rise, —
The speckled trout that glint in mountain streams.
A cast! How quick the speckled beauties rise,
Catch at the falsehood, take the cruel steel,

INDIAN LEAP



Swirl the smooth water. See ! the spinning reel
Bespeaks for us a struggle for the prize!
Hither he darts and thither flies again.
The twanging linen cuts the crystal sheet
Of limpid water. In its course so fleet,
The raving beauty struggles in his pain.
With careful hand, we hold his headlong flight
Until he yields. His battle is in vain,
While all the pool now wears a crimson stain.
With one wild effort he gives up the fight,
And from the depths of his own fair retreat,
With quivering body and mouth open wide,
He turns a conquered captive on his side,
And we in triumph draw him to our feet,
And link our cruel fingers in his gill,
And take him quivering from his native stream.
In the full flush of a proud sportsman's dream,
Exultant joy our beating pulses fill.

'T was so at first, and may it so remain.
When Crawford came here for his early bath,
When by these streams the deer had beaten path,
Such trout were caught and plenteous game was slain.
Then with rude hook fashioned from jagged bone,
And dainty line from toughest sinews spun,
The Indian took the finest fish that run
These mountain streams to feast upon alone.

And can we think no passions filled his breast
When these fair pools were swirling in the light ?
And fish like swallows clove the surface bright,
As the full day was sinking in the west.
And had I art to tell what dainty meat
Rolled from the ashes swathed in savory leaves,
A golden fillet from the winding sheaves,
So luscious it seemed cookery complete !
But this is dreaming dreams of long ago,
E'er skillful sportsmen with their subtle art
Threw barbed steel wherever fish may dart
And took the trout from all the streams that flow !

XVI

I THOUGHT to lead you for a summer day,
But led you whither through this tangled wood
Over the mountains where the cabin stood ?
But like a novice, I have lost my way.

Hark ! There are horses on the mountain-side !
And see ! The villain we have seen before !
He is the one driven from Crawford's door.
With bad intent so skulking, see him hide !
Two horses tethered, while from tree to tree
He glides like savage scanning yonder path.

THE TROUT BROOK



His ugly visage scowls as if in wrath.
Stopping he looks, he wonders. Can it be
His eyes deceive him ? In his saddle seated
The fair young girl, the victim he is seeking !
Her actions call him without even speaking ;
The evil of his purpose is defeated.

He came to kidnap Crawford's daughter fair,
Who spurned his presence, drove him from her door ;
And thought 't was she, yet how could she dare,
Alone, now court him ? She had e'er before
Been diffident, shrinking, and afraid.
“ What meaneth this so very strange ? ” he said.
There was no trouble in her nut-brown cheek,
There was no anger, and there seemed no fear.
She bade him mount nor gave him time to speak.
Leading, she fled. His courser followed near.
They left the forest for the beaten road,
And in mad gallop they began the chase.
Her hair unbound, in waving tresses flowed,
While like a hind she led him in the race.
On in wild ride they were in fury tossed,
Then past the Postboy like the flying wind,
They were again in the green forest lost
E'er he the meaning of it all divined.
He saw her face, as like the light they move,
And her lithe form in terror seemed to fly.

It was like Mary. Aye! it seemed his love.
What meaneth it? How could she pass him by?
An awful moment. Yet how could it be?
He left her safe but a short hour ago,
And at her home from every danger free,
And with her father. Who could be her foe?
He knew another had presumed? But no.
Had thought? No. Dared? No. Tried? But surely
failed
To win or bribe or dare to claim or woo
Her from him, but in nothing had prevailed.

In wild debate, a thousand passions rise.
To follow them would little him avail.
And were it she, in love her eager eyes
Would claim his aid whatever might assail.
The glimpse he caught set all his pulse afame,
Yet doubting more, for they met eye to eye.
No recognition from her glances came,—
He was a stranger as she passed him by.
His duty calls the post. The nation's trust
Must not delay for any selfish care.
Had he excuse or reason that was just
Why to delay or doubting linger there?
The cause of his anxiety and fear
Rode free and smiling, and she seemed to lead.
Which one, if either, hardly did appear

The wronged or victim. Could he dare to plead ?
“ ‘T was passing strange,” he musing went his way.
Indeed, ‘t was strange. No answer could he find.
Fretted and vexed, he rode the whole long day,
This mystery revolving in his mind,
Longing yet dreading the returning hour,
When seven days hence he hither must return,—
Seven days of struggle with an unknown power,
A secret he would almost dread to learn.

The days grew ages as the time advanced ;
And when again he neared the haunted spot,
A thousand shapes before his vision danced,
Nor was one single agony forgot
Of that dread week. But wonder ! hark ! Again
The trees were singing and the mountain’s voice
Rang out a song in a familiar strain
In notes so sweet he could not but rejoice.
The echo song, once more we hear it ringing,
As rock and mountain fondled with the song,
And through the trees a scarf to him was swinging,
While merry laugh her stanzas did prolong.

Startled, he roused him from his revery, —
So unexpected and so sweet the song, —
Spurred on his steed, giving the bridle free.
The fleeting moments now were doubly long.

She seems the very soul of all the place.
And harken to the song ! Through the great trees,
A constant flood of melody we trace,—
Her happy soul is floating on the breeze.

ECHO SONG

Echoes ! echoes ! hear them moving,
Like the wood-doves when a-loving !
Sweeter sounds had never voice,
Words did never more rejoice.
Echoes ! hear their gentle measure,
What a lover's heart might treasure.
And all life doth seem to move
In a very world of love.

And all Nature is rejoicing !
Rocks and trees their joys are voicing !
Laden with so sweet a song,
Everything has found a tongue !
Everything has learned the measure
That a lover's heart could treasure,
And all life doth seem to move
In a very world of love !

Why ? We listen. Hear the echo
In a thousand gentle strains
Give in song our words. The echo
Bears away all sound that pains.
Nothing but the sweetest measure,
Naught but lover's heart could treasure,
And all life doth seem to move
In a very world of love !

Now she ceases, all is still
Save the clatter of the hoof.
Answer, echo, if you will,
Thou art worthy of reproof.

Where's the treasure in thy keeping ?
Echo, thou art surely sleeping ;
No clear bugle wakes thy tongue ;
Surely thou hast missed the song.
Where's the note thy members move ?
Hast thou lost the tone of love ?
Then is gone thy richest treasure, —
Thing of price beyond a measure, —
Thou but murmuring shadows move,
Lost without the note of love !

He left the road to cross a nearer way
O'er sandy reaches of the empty stream,

He stops in wonder. How could he delay.
In crystal pool he caught a yellow gleam,
A treasure trove, a long, rich, golden chain.
He took the links, held up the golden prize,
And with light heart he hastened on again.
To her the trophy will be glad surprise.

The links were smooth, and all the cunning art
Embossed or graved upon them now gives space
To grooves so deep they almost fall apart.
A golden locket barely kept its place ;
And it is gold, and he had ne'er before
Held in his hand a thing of so much art,
Or seen such marvel in the precious ore.
The locket, too, was shaped like golden heart.
He held it as a child holds new-found toy,
And with new pain urged on again his steed.
Greeting his love, he held the chain so coy
That it might prove a full surprise indeed.
He swung it o'er her head, and the rich links
Fell in sweet grace and glistened on her breast.
Startled at first, feeling the chill, she shrinks ;
But seeing it, she fondly lets it rest.

He quite forgot, while in her sunny smile,
The weary hours that moved with laggard pace,

Leaped from the saddle, made his knee a stile
By which she quickly mounted in his place.
“ Tardy, my love. So long upon the way.
The bugle lost, or has it lost its tongue ? ”
It was forgotten ! The first time to-day,
And until now mute at his saddle hung.
He gave it to her. She in sport essayed
To wake the echo, but the uncouth sound
That blurted out, her want of skill betrayed,
Awakened laughter that the echo found.

Ha, ha ! Ha, ha ! Ha, ha ! limpid as water falling !
The trees awake, the zephyrs shake,
The hidden powers are calling.
Ha, ha ! Ha, ha ! Ha, ha ! Her soul in love is swelling,
And all the beauties that are here
In sweetest charms of life appear,
In gentle laughter ringing.
The grandest symphony we hear,
Ten thousand voices singing,
In Nature’s richest dwelling.
Ha, ha ! Ha, ha ! Ha, ha ! is ringing out so clear
Her heart’s full story telling.

And her young heart, so running o’er with love
And honest joy when he is at her side,

Held the full moments as they swiftly move.
Of pleasure, it was life's incoming tide,
And all that was before of toil and care
Became as nothing to his beating heart.
She rode. He walking, held her hand so fair.
It was true love without a taint of art.

There was enough to give their tongues employ.
The hour appointed comes with ceaseless tread,—
A time to them so full of promised joy.
Now scarce a month e'er they are to be wed.
Much she would tell him, for she had no other
Patient companion who could take her care.
Could he be like a sister or a brother,
How light her very hardest load to bear.
Her trousseau finished. Oh, for other eyes
To tell her were it lacking in a grace !
The wedding dress, her father's own surprise,
Her mother's gift trimmed with such dainty lace.
What would she give, if she could tell him all !
To her so wonderful, for ne'er before
Did such possessions to her fortune fall,—
For she but homespun of their weaving wore.

XVII

THEY neared her father's door. At the same time
Another party galloped up the road,—
A portly stranger now beyond his prime,
With servant who attentive near him stood.

He saw the two, and as in great surprise
Looked long at Mary, and eager in his care
Spoke to himself, while tears bedimmed his eyes,
And all his features wore a look of care.
Then spake aloud addressing the fair one,
“ My daughter, can it be that I have found
Thee in this forest ? Then my work is done.
Life will for me again in love abound.
Oh ! fear me not, I pray ; but let me see
The secret of that locket and the chain.”
She gave it to him. Then he said, “ Must be ;
This is the lost, my daughter once again.”
His fingers found the secret hidden spring,
The golden heart was in his palm in twain,
A miniature appeared, alas ! to bring
The hidden past with all its care again.

It was a piece of most exquisite art, —
A sweet young girl like Mary's face indeed,

In features true, almost a counterpart.
“For me,” he said, “the picture is to plead.
Pray, look upon her and the painted toy.
She is her mother’s second self so fair.
Could she but know me, what a world of joy
That I again a daughter’s love could share!”

Crawford, near by, in blank amazement stood.
The past came back with all its scenes so wild.
This key unlocked the secret of the flood,
The mother’s corpse, the little helpless child.
His heart was full. All his nature strove
To put himself into the stranger’s place.
At length he spake, “Kind sir, no further rove.
Remain and solve the riddle of this face.
I bid you stay and with me be at rest.
Your daughter lives and is not far away.
Whether ’t is she or Mary, you may best
As father claimant with assurance say.”
He gave him briefly the whole history
Of flood and fire and Hermit. Then he said,
“The long years since are full of mystery.
Our lives with Mary are inwrought with dread;
For in the wild-wood by the merest chance,
A hundred times and in a hundred places,
We meet, or truer only catch a glance
Of her sweet face. And yet there are two faces,

For Mary always meets me with a smile.
Her eyes are ever beaming full of love,
So simple and so free from every guile;
Her daily life does in my living move.
These hoary hands, so tempered hard with toil,
Feel the soft pressure of her dewy palm,
Nor could she from my sunburned cheek recoil.
Her presence always brings me peace and calm;
But, somehow, oft of late, I see her double,
Another, quite as fair and young as she
But cold to me. It is a world of trouble
To see, yet know not what the ill can be.
And such a wealth of dresses, my poor store
Could never purchase them and jewels rare
As her slim fingers in such beauty wore.
A lady bred as fine as she seemed fair.
The face I knew, for like as like could be
To yon fair face now colored in the sun.
And though so kind, she seemed aloof from me,
Above me, as the stars their courses run.

“ But there is one thing that these passing years
Has not erased from my poor memory,
Where once in rust a witching mole appears
On dimpled cheek.” The old man started. “ See!
A mother’s mark. None who had never seen
Could paint the features your kind words portray !

This mark for us a beauty spot has been.
To me 'twas more," he added by the way,
"For when she came a babe about our hearth,
And we decided she should be our own,
And the two children be of equal worth,
In all our love to us be only one,
This dainty mark, this little ashen spot,
Had caught mine eye and burned into my heart,
And through these years could never be forgot.
Save this, the two could not be told apart.

"'T is fifteen years since the relentless flame
Burned these rough furrows in my beardless face,—
Fifteen long years, she left us as she came,
When we were deep in trouble's rough embrace.
It was but little and but vague we learned
From Mary, who was from us a full year,
When she so strangely to us was returned,
Except to feel the other one was near.
I have no doubt that with the morrow's sun
We will get trace of her, and it may be
E'er it another circling course has run
Her supple form thy longing eyes may see.

"But have no fear, for she is guarded well.
No ill could ever dare to cross her path,
Shielded by him, the Hermit of the Dell.

Who sought her harm would meet relentless wrath.”
The old man said, “ ’T is well. Thy words, forsooth,
In this one secret bear the royal seal,
The signature of our unquestioned truth.
Thy friendship needs not from thee an appeal.

“ But bear with me, for I have much to tell.
All until now was dreadful mystery.
For eighteen years no word has broke the spell
That held enthralled my loved ones’ history.
I parted with them at my English home,
And bade them Godspeed far beyond the sea.

“ I wait and waited, but no tidings come.
Not e’en a word was told me but by thee.
And now I know my years are almost gone,
And all my lands, my wealth, and e’en my name,
Have neither heir nor heiress save this one.
These all are waiting only for her claim.

“ Yes, the fair acres of good English soil,
And the great castle that protects the same,
The loyal tenantry whose willing toil
And honest care is for their master’s name,—
All is for one alone, this orphan child,
This waif, this shadow, this the Hermit’s care,
This almost spirit in the mountains wild.

Can I believe it? Can I? Shall I dare?"
O'ercome, he sinking bowed his snowy head.

But hark! A shriek was through the valley ringing!
A clanking hoof, followed by stealthy tread
In close pursuit, e'en to the saddle clinging.
It was the Hermit and the one pursued.
The uncouth villain held in his embrace
A struggling girl, and held by him so rude,
Though mounted, he was second in the race.
Now foiled in fury he unsheathed a knife,
But e'er he struck, unhorsed we see him fall.
The two were locked, engaged in deadly strife.
A single furious moment covered all,
And e'er great Crawford who with instant speed
Reached them to help, the sanguine work was done!
The Hermit seemed the victor there, indeed;
But see his life in gushing throbbings run!
His bony hand is on the villain's throat
In grasp of death, his knee is on his breast.
They saw the face in livid colors bloat,
The strangled monster was in death at rest.

They raised the maiden and the Hermit too,
But now past help, his glassy eyes bespeak
How little more was left for him to do.
His grasp he yielded not, though faint and weak,

Till Mary came and kneeling took his hand.
He smiling said, "For you, whate'er it be,
Life was worth living, long as it could stand
Protector of such lovely girls as thee,
This Mary Crawford"— But e'er all was said
In throes of death he sank at Mary's feet.
His strange life done, and now his spirit fled,
Whate'er its purpose, it is now complete.

The villain's corpse, now rigid, hard, and cold,
Was not neglected, though with bated breath,
Crawford in him did sullen guest behold,—
The thankless charge, the one he saved from death,
The only man that he had ever feared.
Not for his strength, or skill, or for his might,
Not for himself, or who he was, he cared,—
But for the lowering look that caught his sight.

He had him buried, in the darkness late,
Wrapped in a blanket so that none should know
That he had saved from wolves for such a fate
So mean a cur to every good a foe.

The Hermit's corpse receives their tender care.
They watched as friends would watch by kindred dear,
And as for kindred they did all things prepare,
And wept as nearest mourners by the bier.

XVIII

A LL this so strange (as well the dreadful race)
Must need explaining. Now, for fifteen years
Of this fair girl we have not had a trace,—
Her life unknown, her pleasures, or her tears.

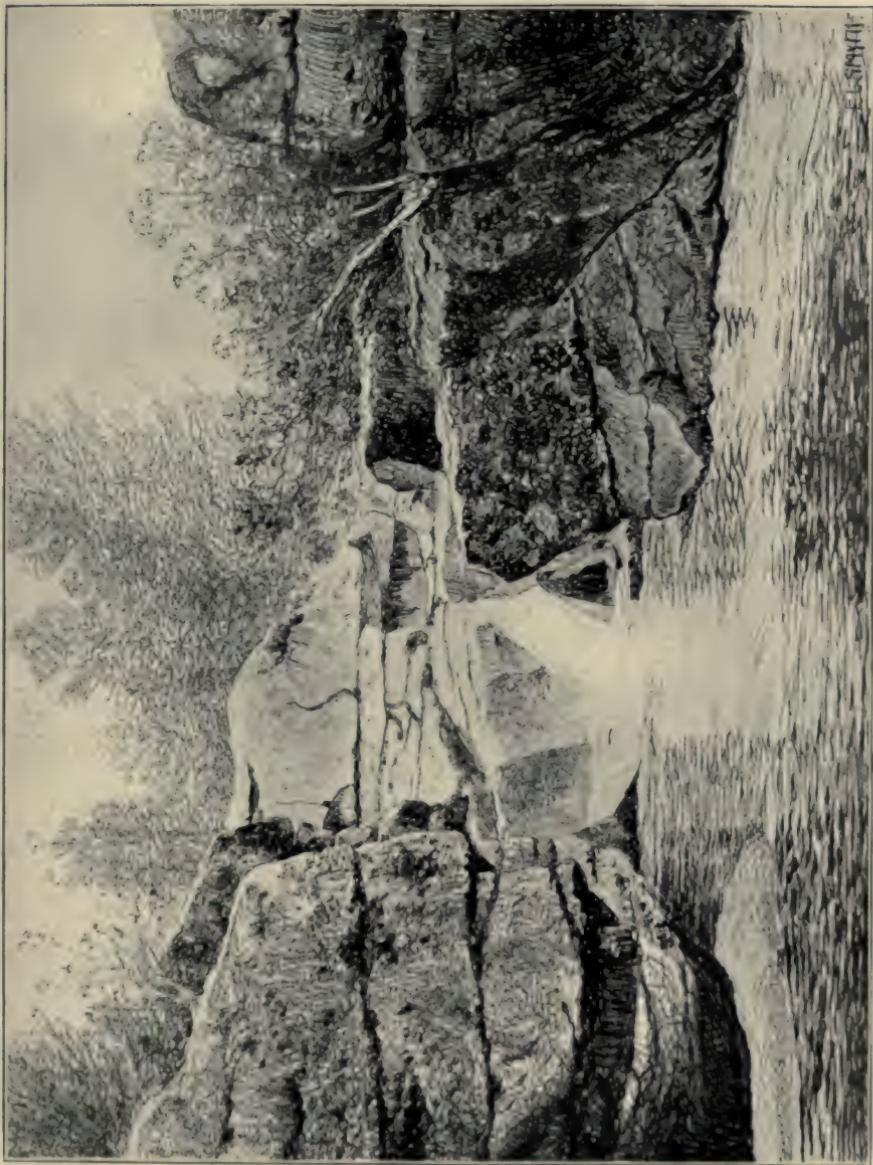
It is a tangled skein and fancy leaves
To us a web with shuttle but half thrown;
Or like a glimpse when the quick lightning cleaves
The sombre cloud over a land unknown.

And what we see of so much mystery
Was but a ruse of the old Hermit's mind,
So strange, I will relate a history
And why the maid was to such life inclined.

And why so fearless she should act such fearful part,
Tempting the tempter, seemingly alone.
Hers was a stratagem of subtle art,
To lure a traitor where his schemes were known.

He came for vengeance and he came prepared,
Knowing full well where Mary's love would lead
Her through the forest, e'en the path she shared
With her betrothed, a rosy path indeed.

E. S. SKOF.



FALLS OF AMMONOOSUC

To seize and bind her to an untamed horse,
Mizpah-like, was fashioned in his mind.
Had he been able his purpose to enforce,
No harder chase from dogs had panting hind.

Here is the sequel. The old Hermit's eye
Had caught him lurking. We may now recite
The fancy strange of plotting. He will try
In his own coin the traitor to requite.

The Hermit's charge, his ever guarded care,—
She the foster daughter of the wood,—
What he proposed, never refused to dare;
What she might dare, he her protector stood.

And the wild ride! These meshes she inwove
With dainty hands about the captive's way,—
Meshes of death, knit by the hands of love.
The victim feared, yet hoping made delay;
Knew he was captive and yet no shackles feels;
A prisoner, yet not a bar was raised;
A coming dread the moment but conceals
In all he saw or heard he was amazed.

For a whole week he found himself alone
With this young girl, who curled her lip in scorn
When in his face a sign of passion shone.

One look from her sufficient was to warn.
He was a captive, yet without a chain,—
A week a captive, in the forest wild,—
To her his prey. To seize her was in vain.
And yet, why so? She was a simple child.
She brought him food, yet held him as a beast,
Throwing the savory viands at his feet,
In proud contempt she left him to the feast,
With less of care than any dog would meet.

Thus days go by. His plans e'er born were foiled.
To leave without her were to fail indeed,
But every plot by some mischance was spoiled.
Do what he would, her purposes would lead.
And now, at length, quite goaded to despair
He takes his horses stamping at his side,
With settled purpose either one shall bear
Him and his victim in a fearful ride.
He sees her coming and in stealth is creeping
Beneath a bush that reaches o'er her path.
But see! A panther huge beside her leaping!
Her gentle hand subdues its eager wrath.

“Ha, ha,” she said, “you thought I came alone,
But pretty puss is ready for the play!”
Taunted, his eyes in desperate fury shone.
“Panther or devil! thou shalt be my prey.”

Erect he stands, a human fiend in wrath.
The human eyes the panther's fairly meet.
The beast was cowed and groveled in the path,
Before those eyes slunk back in base retreat.
The human fiend, surprised at his own power,
Turned full his fury on the trembling prey
(With looks so fierce well might a panther cower)
And hissed, "With more than panther thou shalt play!"

And more than panther rose up in his path,—
The Hermit wild, with locks as white as snow,
And eyes aflame in fury and in wrath.
His long white beard did o'er his shoulders flow.
But poorly had he weighed the weight of years,
To meet a fiend angry and in his prime.
They locked in fury, but again appears
How more than strong is passion urged by crime.

The brutal victor grasped the helpless girl,
Mounted his steed and in a breath was flying
As flies the wintry wind in whistling whirl,
Cursing to hear his victim's helpless crying.
But a wild and winding mountain path
Gave to the Hermit ample time to meet
And wait for them and nurse his eager wrath,
And plan this scheme of vengeance to defeat.

We know the sequel. Near the cabin door,
The Hermit old, shorn by the hand of time,
Became in nerve what he had ne'er before,
And lithe as panther in his youth and prime
Sprang from the roadside on the flying steed,
Grasping the rider, choking back his breath.
Nor from that grip could the old hand be freed
Until the ruthless villain fell in death.

He then gave up his charge, his blessing said,
And sank in throes of death at Mary's feet!
And now his strange life done, his spirit fled,
Whate'er its aim, its work was now complete!

The fair young girl, hurled like a fragrant bough
From the great forest, trembling at their feet,
A resting-place was well provided now,
As sweet a home as one could care to meet.
And at their hearth with all their kindly arts
She will recover and in tenderness
A daughter found be taken to their hearts
With every care to lighten her distress.
And it were many days e'er yet again
The bloom of health was painted on her cheek,
Or that she learned of her protector slain,
Or how Sir Thomas came his heir to seek.

But she had learned to love him day by day,
And call him father, he so kind did prove,
No wish of hers in answer had delay,
To watch and tend her was his work of love.
And word by word in softest accents fell
The broken story of her baby years,
With earnest hope that something he might tell
Would give a gleam as to a ship appears
The long-left port with mist and fog between,—
Shorn of the light; but broken glimmer gives
Clue to the harbor till its glinting sheen
Opens the way to where the dear one lives.
He spoke of home, his voyage 'cross the sea,
And the great city, Boston, when a gleam
Of living interest in her face we see.
She said, "Of such I have a wondrous dream !
Methinks I see it, in the tangled strand
Of memory like sheen on yonder river.
So far it stretches like a silver band,
And then again in golden ripples quiver.
Awake, I see it and 't is in my mind
That the great city 's near the water side;
A broken wall, and yet so undefined,
I seem to see it on the waters ride.
I see a grove of lofty slender trees.
But ever strange, their leaves are never green,

Although they sway and swing in every breeze.
Clambering o'er them busy men are seen,
And such an uproar, such a hum of voices !
A thousand sounds in clamor seem to rise,
A thousand tongues, and yet not one rejoices !
I see and hear, and then the vision dies.

“ Is this like Boston ? Very well I know
It is as vague as any of my dreams,
But somehow strangely my thoughts do ever go
To this one picture, it so real seems.

“ And many times I ’ve stood beneath yon cliff,
Looked up its stony sides and fancied there
Houses of stone so great and high, as if
Men had the power such a wondrous work to dare.
I ’ve heard of castles too and of the sea,
Of lands and towns beyond the forest wild ;
But until now it never came to me
How strange it all must be to forest child.”

“ How strangely true,” they heard the old man say,
“ Time weaves a veil into whose mesh are wrought
The various scenes that meet us in the way,
And with the bitter, almost quite forgot.
’T is memory’s star whose long receding beam
Glints o’er the clouds and mists of crowding years,

Shaping the past like to a fairy dream,
Leaping the valleys that are full of fears.

“ Who knows the secret in the loom before
Woven for her and cherished for my sake,—
Treasures my own and yet another’s store,
A web that only angry winds may shake.

“ Almost a blank, the dim receding edge
Of memory sees but the landing stage,—
Yet of her lineage this may be a pledge.
What might have been does not her thoughts engage.
I ’ll not disturb them. Let the blank remain.
Years in the forest without school or care
She shall amend and I fear not attain
By native shrewdness what there is to share.”

Reared in the forest, she had early learned
That evil might put on the robes of light,
That viper’s fang lay ’neath the leaves she turned,
That danger walked by daylight as at night.
She looked into the face of human smiles,
Just as she looked into the crystal stream,
And saw beneath the pebbles there were wiles
And monsters ugly as we see in dreams.
And she had learned that life had studied part,
Knew good from evil, and knew well her art.

Need I say more? Our fancy might reveal
Unwritten pages of the fair one's life,
A thread that only poets may unreel,
Gems gathered only in the sieve of strife,
Links in the chain of so much mystery,
With him the Hermit, but a shadow yet;
Who may record his broken history?
Who will his life in noble picture set?
'T was she the Hermit rescued from the flood,
And then, again, with Mary from the flame.
He risked his life to save her in the wood,
And then he left her without care or shame.
We know the children in their artless ways
Had touched the old compassion in his breast,
And wakened in him thoughts of other days,
Striking a chord that would not let him rest.
His life till then had been an empty span,
A vagary of selfish will and pride.
In proud contempt he held his fellow man,
Lived for a vow and nothing else beside.
A full year's struggle racked and jarred his heart,—
A year of war with every kindly thought.
Duty and love and charity took part,
And yet for self against them all he fought.

He wandered far like restless beast of prey,
But, somehow, ever found himself returning

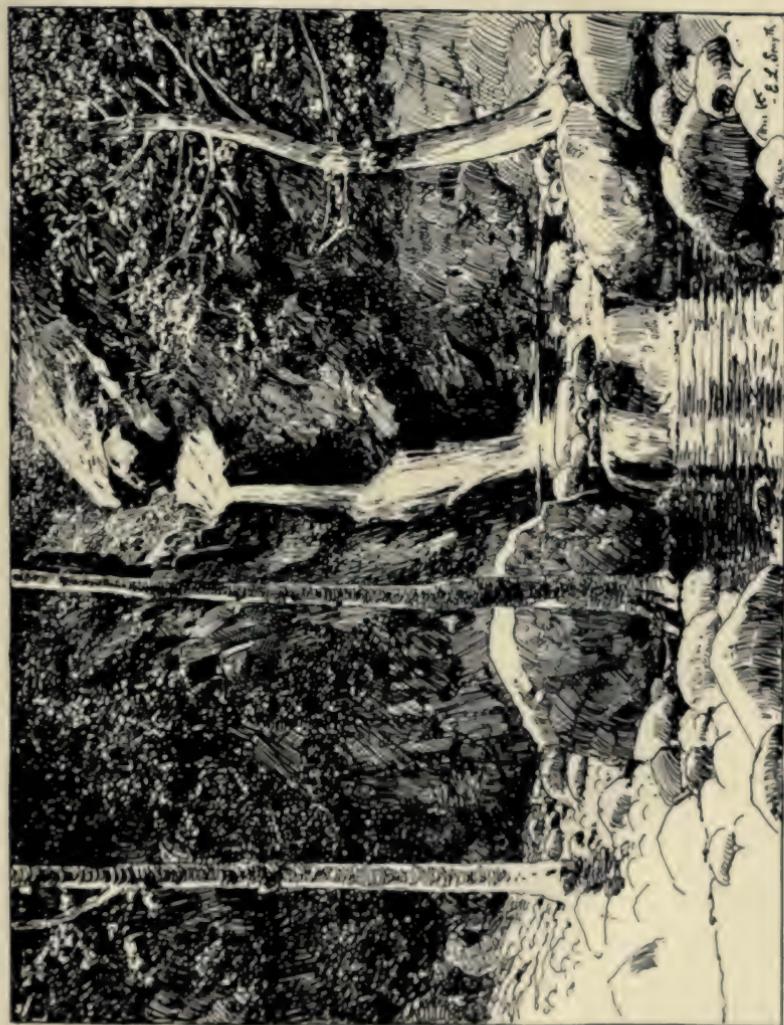
E'en to the place he left them in the way,
In anxious thought their circumstances learning.
And when he learned that Crawford still was living,
He took upon himself to judge when best
He might return their own, a child worth giving,
As if their good was at his own behest.

The other child, so little as we know,
When even young of disposition strange,
Showed her wild passion by an angry blow,—
In growing up, her daring did not change.
She grew more hardy with her added years,
And being cunning, used her wily art
To find the Hermit where his trail appears ;
And when she found him she besieged his heart,
Would not release or let him leave her side.
Go where he might, she was as fleet as he.
Though to evade her every scheme he tried,
The Hermit's daughter she was bound to be.

Could we have seen her, then, ten years ago,
One of six children in the cabin door,
Near where the Ammonoosuc's waters flow,
That she was stranger there we might be sure.
Six summers old, tall and slim and straight,
With hazel eyes that sparkle in the light,
And waving tresses that could dare to mate

With the fair beams that shimmer in the night,
In garb of coarse blue linen home-spun stuff,
Her shapely feet bare all the summer day
(Moccasins and stockings were enough
When the cold sleet stole all the flowers away).
She had grown hardy and for two long years;
Had been well cared for by these honest folk.
Her wildness oft excited many fears,
And yet to chide her only worse bespoke.

She'd steal the rifle, drag it to the wood,
And little matter to her what the game,
Bear, wolf, or deer, her nerve and aim were good, —
Diana never empty-handed came.
She tamed the beasts and they as fondlings played,
Like fawning kittens, ever at her side,
Came at her call, and her behests obeyed,
Frolicked about her in their sport and pride.
Watch as they might, yet she outwitted all,
She knew each path and whither it might lead,
The name of every brook, the ford, the fall,
In thickest forest or in fairest mead.
And like the wily savage she had learned
The faintest marking of a secret trail.
Even the Hermit's footsteps she discerned.
His utmost cunning was of no avail.



HERMIT'S FALL.

April 15 - E. L. Gray &
Wilson

She knew his secret hiding and could tell
Just where to find him, be it night or day,
His cherished secrets she knew quite as well
As he, who thought none living could betray.

“My foster father.” See his flowing beard.
She gently strokes it now bestrewn with gray.
“These cheeks so seldom by a smile are cheered
I fear me reason soon will lose its sway.
It cannot be, so true and good a soul
Has not in common something with the race.
Dismiss these whims that have thee in control,
And take a fairer fellow in their place.”

‘T was a strange picture; in a fretful mood
She came upon him, though he tried to fly,
A laughing, teasing Naiad she stood,
Revealing secrets he could not deny.
“Ha! ha!” she said, “you think me but a child,—
A girl at that,— a weak and puny thing,
Dreaming yourself in freedom here so wild.
But now, my bird, ‘t is I will clip thy wing.

“I need no chain to hold thy roving feet
When thou art limping, and at best must be
Guest of the winds. Know I am quite as fleet!
You must not think to flee or hide from me.

“I have a riddle which if thou wilt guess
The spells I use will be all plain to thee;
And that I hold thee, thou wilt wonder less
Than that I e'er permit thee to be free!

“A flock of birds that once on fleetest wing
Cut the blue ether with their pinions bright,
Were caged, because in joy they dared to sing,
And kept imprisoned from the world of light.
By some hard chance, a child was thither brought
Into the dungeon deep and dark and cold;
Its helplessness the jailor’s pity caught.
He swung the shutters that were gray with mould.
Against his will he did it, but he said,
‘Duty is deaf to everything but one.
Who is not lost, to me is surely dead;
But who is lost, my help and life hath won.
The shame, though bitter, never was my own.
The curse I bear was brought upon my head
E’er I was born, and left to me alone.
Bastard with life, and yet *am dead!*’”

“Riddle indeed,” the Hermit started, saying
“A witch’s riddle, for it doth reveal
Its very answer perfectly portraying
What in a riddle one would most conceal.

Witch thou must be. And you would here again
Loosen the bolts and open wide the door,
Freeing the birds that flutter to my pain ?
Let me get hence and never see thee more !

“ Love, hope, and pity, how they beat the bars
Of my poor heart in struggle to be free !
How pride against them all in fury jars !
How malice comes and makes a fiend of me ! ”

“ Poor wandering Hermit, let me see those tears.”
She took his hand, looking into his eyes,
They are the first that crossed those cheeks in years.
“ They will not sting, if love may wipe them dry.
Let me, thy daughter, get into thy breast,
Draw every bolt and make thee free indeed !
Instead of sorrow, let me be thy guest !
The birds will sing again when they are freed ! ”

Is it in words to picture such a scene,
Deep in the shadow of the forest wild,
Youth and old age, with many years between ?
Broken, he listens to the pleading child.

“ It may be so, thou hast the golden key,”
Now the first smile that moved his face for years

In quivering lines about his eyes we see,
When with her hair she wipes away the tears.

“If one so cruel and so mean as I
Can be thy father, all I have is thine!”
His heavy wallet meets her wondering eye,
And through its meshes, golden tokens shine.
He hands it to her, saying, “Daughter fair,
Take this and use it as thy needs may prove.
I have no home that’s fit for thee to share,—
In building one for me, thou ’lt prove thy love.”

“ And now, my father, that we both are free,
Though poorly skilled in the refined of life,
So quick to learn, perhaps, I may yet be
As polished as the fairest in the strife.
Shake off the past. A creeping worm, perchance,
May loose the tendrils of the clinging vine,
That shades the oak from every seeming glance
That comes with blessing from a hand divine.”

“Hark! prattling child. Do you not know your art?
What’s new in thee, in me is cold and bare,
The very thing that quickest fires thy heart,
In me is but a weary load of care.
I never knew what was a mother’s love,

A father's smile was sinister on his face,
A brother's hand a robber's clutches prove,
And life to me was only a disgrace.

I loved and fondly all my hopes were wrapped
In the one object dearer than my life ;
Bastard she learned. Ne'er deeper chasm gaped
Or hatred spurned a foe in bitterer strife.
The world grew little. Every winking eye
Or taunting smile that crossed the human face
Was pointed at me, as they passed me by,
And everything seemed mocking my disgrace.
The rest is simple. Here for forty years,
I lived and listened to the sighing wood,
A life so simple, free from all my fears,
Though vain perchance, I 'm happy in the good."

"Cease thy complaints. Oh, listen while I speak !
My life has not been stranger to thy sight.
Where could a mother, father, brother seek
More than thy care to guard me in the right."
She thus continued in her sweetest mood
To plead with all the fervor of her heart,
Such simple truths in words so kind and good,
So deep and tender, yet without an art.
"What have I known that could to virtue move,
Or shape the simplest actions of my life ?

And what, pray tell me, do you mean by love,
Else than a feeling that's opposed to strife?"

Is life these moments that so laggard move
Like uncouth cattle in a crooked lane,
Plucking the newborn grass they so much love,
Then stumble on in crooked path again,—
In lazy motion to the closèd gate
Where they impatient as we mortals wait?

Wait! wait! wait! the farmer comes so slow,
The moments drag as if could never be
That this one barrier opes to let them through,
Or lagging tyrant comes to set them free.
'T is but a moment, yet what rush and strife!
The only moment when these beasts have life.

They saunter now or loiter as they please,
In the rich pasture that's before them spread
Some feed, some sleep, they seem to take their ease.
Free, they are calm without the least of dread.
So with our moments, as they move along,
If all our own they seem a gentle song.

XIX

“ **I**S this not love, the tiny drops that cling
To dewy leaf and sparkle in the light ?
A thousand pictures glint their brilliant sides !
A thousand motions move their swaying tides !
A world is there with all its themes so bright
Until away it flies on diamond wing,
To gladden more the waiting, drooping flower,
And bring to life the children of the night, —
A life of love and love in all its power.”
A strange, kind look came o'er his wrinkled face
At Mary's most ingenuous soliloquy.
Picture of something from the past we trace,
For only love could such a look betray.

“ True, we may live a hundred years
And feel our pleasures but begun
Until our joy well up in tears
And all our senses beat as one, —
The heart, the soul, the life, the will
Spring into being that may be
Greater than all the worlds can fill,
A universe of ecstacy !
All that we know but baubles seem,
All that we have at best is mean,

In this our precious moment's dream,
And this one dream be purest love!

“ It may be life to live as we are living,
Keep all we get and get all that we can,
Be like the world so chary in our giving,
Enough that we are like our fellow man !
We may be wise and love the human race,
And think our counsel should its wisdom be,
And slap old Nature squarely in the face
Who has made them as good as you or me !

“ It costs but little thus our hearts to move.
What are our words but passing wasted breath ?
What are our thoughts without the stamp of love,
But flitting phantoms leading on to death ?
But love is welcome at each turning gate
Of toil or sorrow or when all is done :
E'en at the last, love for us still will wait,
When all things else are faded, lost, and gone.”

’T would be a tedious story to repeat
The words that passed between them at that hour.
The artless girl was innocence complete,
The questions asked tried all the Hermit’s power.
She broke the meshes that had thralled his heart,
In reticence and mystery so long.

He felt himself of something else a part.
She swept away the memory of his wrong.

He felt the sunshine and he saw the flowers ;
The world was brighter ; time was speeding on ;
The day to him again was marked by hours ;
Life had a purpose, something to be done.

Now for a dozen years, his withered heart
Had left the fondling to a bitter life,
Deeming her shrewdness but the wiles of art, —
Her nobleness but proper thing for strife.
And she had grown almost to womanhood,
In ignorance of all that could refine.
But now before him she in beauty stood,
So wise, so fair, she almost seemed divine.

XX

THE WEDDING MORNING

MIDSUMMER'S morning and the early sky,
Bedecked with glory, gathers in the stars.
Across the mountains glint the golden bars.
The rays like flocks of winged jewels fly.
The valley glows in a reflected beam,
An emerald as set in gems of light

More soft and fair, and yet more fairly bright
Than any crystal by itself could gleam.

The hush is broken, and in joyous song
A thousand tongues give welcome to the day,
A thousand tones in one grand symphony
Are ringing now, the welcome to prolong.

Nature is glad, and in its rejoicing
The mountains laugh and streamlets fleck their faces ;
The old gray rocks have gold put on in places;
Even the wind its softest theme is voicing.

It is the wedding morning and we meet
The country parson with his old gray mare
In ample season that he may be there,—
He and his nag were never counted fleet,
Except at times when circumstances move.
The sick, the dying, the penitent in prayer
Needing his help, then was he surely there,
And always prompt when at the call of love.

This morning he was in most cheerful mood,
Singing from Watts, in scales from Mendelssohn,
So full of joy, as he was riding on,
As to awake the music of the woods.

A royal chorus in so strange a place,
A white-birch forest ; and 't is said that here
The only groves of such great trees appear, —
So great, so many uncouth shapes we trace.
Tree from whose bark the savage with rude art
Shapes his canoe of such light, fairy form,
Which serves to shelter him and his from storm, —
Found elsewhere in the forest, far apart.

Here all are birches, weird, crooked, tall, —
White glistening trunks, as if in silver sheen,
Ragged and tattered where the wind has been,
All stand aslant as if about to fall.

The paper birch, whose shiny, smooth, white rind
Splits to a hundred soft, clear, creamy sheets,
Fragrant and sweet, where lover's pencil meets
As dainty welcome it could ever find.

And the dear letter where pure love is told
On Nature's tablet is of far more worth
Than any paper found upon the earth,
Or any billet ever bought with gold.

The long, lone, crooked road by brookside led.
The parson deep in musing and his song

Whips the old mare and bids her get along,
The sun proclaims the hour is near indeed.

He sees a horseman through the birches moving,
Careless and slowly, on the lonely road,
So deeply musing he almost thinks aloud,
Absorbed in something, all his motions proving.
His horse takes fright and startled now is leaping,
Throwing his burden. Now the cause of fear
We see. There came a noble, bounding deer,
Swiftly his track along the roadside keeping.

The good old preacher comes to his relief,
Finds him unhurt, says, “ God is good, my friend !
Yes, God is good, — His acts to humans tend
To make us love Him, strengthen our belief.”

“ I am not injured, and it is not far
To Crawford’s at the Notch, beyond the Glen.”
“ Well, ride with me, for I am going there,
And thou shalt share in happy pleasures then.”

They chatted by the way of such wild things
As brought the accident, and the good Providence,
Praising the Lord in all the good He brings,
And for our soul, the best of evidence.
They reach the cabin ; the wild steed is there,

And e'er they neared it, help was on the way
To learn the harm, or who might need their care,
And urge the good old parson on his way.

The stranger nears the door, and strange but true,
Two faces, and alike, two forms the same !
That one he had offended well he knew,
But which were she he had not power to name.
If she were lovely when he saw her last,
These were angelic, O, so wondrous fair !
So like, so lovely, were their glances cast,
He almost feared a dream had led him there !

And now he sees standing at Crawford's side,
A grand old man who knew him from his birth,
His father's friend beyond the ocean-tide.
They greet each other as of equal worth.

A picture true, as near to Crawford's side
The elder started, looks him in the face,
The younger went and stood beside the bride,
“ What ! Sir Francis, are you in this place ? ”

“ Indeed, my Lord, as you are here, I move
And would abide here could it ever be
That I could find favor with my love,
So cruel has it surely been to me.”

“Tut! tut! my boy! It only seems a day!
Now full five years you left your English home,
And such a strapping lad, so lithe and gay!
This is our Alice. We must take her home,
And this is Mary, Mary of the Glen,—
A pair of royal twins and one a bride.”
“Yes,” said the elder, “but what might have been”—
“What might, may be.” He hastens to her side.

“God must be good, it surely cannot be
That Providence has two so like, so fair,
And neither one of them be good to me!
That were unjust to leave me in despair.
God must be good, as we revere His name,
Mary’s a bride I know, but hear my plea,
Mary, her double, too, must be the same!
And grant it, Lord, that she be bride to me.”

“Indeed, Sir Francis,” then the elder said,
“What might have been, as surely yet may be!”
He by his friend was to the lady led.

“This Lady Alice, in her love is free,
This Mary Crawford, and her noble mate,
The rest we leave to love’s sweet, living touch.”
Their eyes are quick, they hasten the debate,
If such were needed, and there was not much,

For smiling eyes and crimson cheeks proclaim
All love could be all that the hearts could hold.
One meeting only, two brides, two grooms the same,
And now my story is told.
'T were time ill spent if I should tell you more ;
My story ends as all good stories do,
If they to Nature happen to be true ;
" All 's well that ends well," we were told of yore.

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